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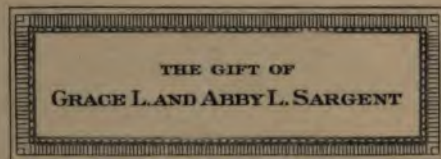
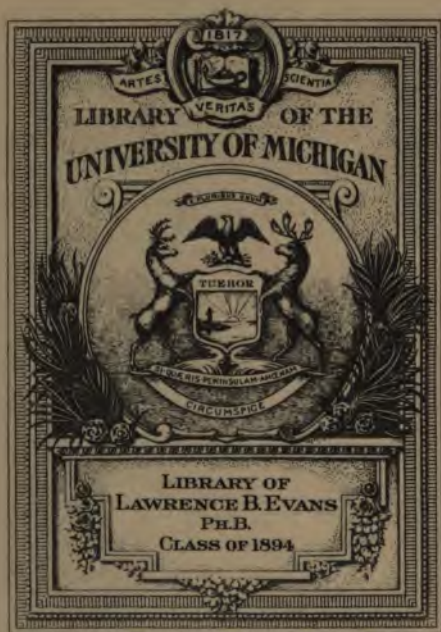
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**OURSELVES**  
**AND**  
**OUR NEIGHBORS.**



# OURSELVES AND OUR NEIGHBORS:

Short Chats on Social Topics.

BY

Mrs. LOUISE (CHANDLER) MOULTON,

AUTHOR OF

"BED-TIME STORIES," "MORE BED-TIME STORIES," "NEW BED-TIME  
STORIES," "FIRESIDE STORIES," "POEMS," "SOME  
WOMEN'S HEARTS," "RANDOM RAMBLES."



By my penny of observation.

*Love's Labor's Lost.*

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## ROSEBUDS IN SOCIETY.





OURSELVES  
AND  
OUR NEIGHBORS.

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ROSEBUDS IN SOCIETY.

THE position of a young girl in society is far more free in America than in any other civilized country. In fact, American society has until lately seemed to be chiefly made up of young girls with their rosebud beauty, their grace and style, and, alas! their hardness and arrogance; for there is nothing in the world so uncharitable in inference, so merciless in criticism, as is youth. For sweetness and generosity of

judgment and toleration of other people's ideas you must

"Wait till you come to forty year."

The French *salon* could never have had its power and its charm had it been abandoned to the rosebuds. *They* were shut up in boarding-schools and convents, and the women who created the *salon* and gathered around them the best society of their time were those who had lived and thought and suffered. It was not so much the beauty of Madame Récamier which surrounded her with an adoring circle, which made old Châteaubriand come to her with his self-love, and young Ampère with his love of her, as the fact that she had lived long enough to be ready to forget herself, a little tired of the details of her own life, and glad to find fresh interests in the thoughts and lives of others.

The American young girl has been suffo-  
cated in the novels of the past

few years. Daisy Miller was one type and not the least touching. The "International Episode" offered us another; and the "Lady of the Aroostook," with her "Yes?" with the rising inflection, her lack of social training, and yet her innocence, her fearlessness, her proud purity, is still dearer to our hearts than the rest.

Shall I be forgiven if I suggest that there is another type of American girl less pleasing than any of these, but, alas! too common,—a girl whose dress is faultless, whose manners are very well on the surface, but whose heart is hard? She is the girl who speaks of a single woman past her first youth as "that poor old thing!" who looks with grave disfavor at a married woman who is intelligently making herself entertaining, and says to her companion, "What airs! Why, she's forty if she's a day!"

Yes—forgive me, thorny rosebuds, but our country is full of you, and you would



be much nicer in a state of society where your thorns would be pruned away in spite of yourselves.

The best authorities on dinner-giving say that no one under twenty-four should ever be invited to a dinner-party; by which I take them to mean that you can hardly expect from people under twenty-four that extent of information, that largeness of toleration, and that keenness of intelligent sympathy which are necessary to make a conversation two or three hours in length delightful.

Dances no doubt belong in the nature of things to the rosebuds; not that other people may not dance, but nobody else ever enjoys dancing quite so much as a girl in her first season. The gay sweetness of the glad waltz music steals into her brain like wine and sets her pulses tingling. Life seems to whirl before her, a *valse à deux*, and she dances till morning with her un-

tiring little feet, and then dances on in her rose-colored dreams.

Theoretically, a girl in England never goes out without a chaperon; but practically, I have discovered that she often does. The bristling hedge of etiquette which surrounds her has many a gap here and there, through which she quietly slips out for a space into the green opening of freedom. The fact remains, however, that she is chaperoned much more thoroughly than in America, and the lines of an English mother who has several daughters do not seem to me to have fallen to her in pleasant or in easy places. How cruelly hard it is, for instance, on a quietly disposed woman in her fat fifties to attire herself in festal array night after night and go forth with her brood to sit braced against the wall till morning, while her offspring are gayly dancing in the centre of the room, brought back, to be sure, from time to time to nestle

for a moment under her broad wings! I always pity these mothers,—they look so weary. Their poor eyes *will* close now and then in spite of themselves, and their heads nod, but not in time to the music.

Yes, I must confess that my sympathies are on the side of the chaperons. The rosebuds are well enough off,—too well. A cynic finds a little comfort in thinking that their turn will come some day, when they will be fat and fifty and sit out long nights listening to the new music to which the rosebuds of that far-off time are dancing.

The subject of chaperonage in America has of late years provoked much discussion. Ladies who have journeyed like Lord Lovell, “strange countries for to see,” often become rigorous in this matter, and will not let their daughters accept any invitations in which they themselves are not included. But this is far from being the general custom, and the question arises, Are our young girls

too little chaperoned, and is the result of the degree of freedom which prevails here pernicious or otherwise?

As a whole it seems to me no girls are nicer than our own. There *are* thorny rosebuds among them, as I have said; but how many there are who are bright and fearless and pure, and full of all the latent possibilities of gracious womanhood. Perhaps they ought not to be allowed to go out so freely as many of them do without an older lady to matronize them; and yet very little harm seems to come of it. If I were a social lawgiver I think I should try to spare mothers from duties so arduous as those of an English mother, and so little agreeable; while at the same time I would guard the wilful rosebuds from being left too much to their own devices. What if a group of mammas, who were well acquainted, should take it in turn to chaperon the daughters of them all? One of them would preside

to night over a theatre party, another be present to-morrow at a dance, a third matronize the next evening's charades. The duties of chaperonage would be quite as well discharged, and the patient race of mothers would be saved an infinite amount of boredom.

In America two girls can certainly be trusted to walk out together, or one girl to go alone if she has need to; and I should be sorry that a day should come when this were not the case. Even in Paris, oddly enough, a young child is a sufficient chaperon; and any girl old enough to be in society can walk in the street leading a little brother or sister with entire propriety.

The society which seems to me most desirable is that where young and old mingle together, which is at once adorned by the grace of girlhood and dignified by the strength and self-possession of maturity. But the drawback in America to the pleas-

ure of such society as this has hitherto been that the young people have seemed to consider that the world belonged to them. They have deliberately pushed their elders to the wall; they have talked so fast and so loudly, and amused themselves so aggressively, that the married and still blooming wall-flowers have been moved to repeat the touching question found on a baby's tombstone,—

“If so soon I must be done for,  
I wonder what I was begun for.”

Things are changing, however, of late, and American society has been more and more modified by acquaintance of many of its members with other countries. Formerly, while abroad marriage was the gate through which alone a woman entered on power and influence, here she walked through it into obscurity, and became of as little consequence as Mr. Toots himself. More and more the European idea that a woman's value is not lessened by maturity, or even

by matrimony, is prevailing in America. Still, it must always remain that the rosebuds have their own exclusive charm,—that “something sweet” that

“Follows youth with flying feet,  
And can never come again.”

To be a fresh and as yet ungathered rosebud is for a girl to be, if she will, a power for good,—a sweetness and a delight to every beholder. But

“While roses are so red,  
And lilies are so white,  
Shall a woman exalt her face  
Because it gives delight?”

The brightest bloom is but brief, and the girl is wise who uses her girlhood as the period in which she may learn to be a woman. Give me the rose who has no thorns, who never is known to judge harshly or speak ungenerously, and who uses the power of her beauty for blessing and not for bane. She it is who need fear no

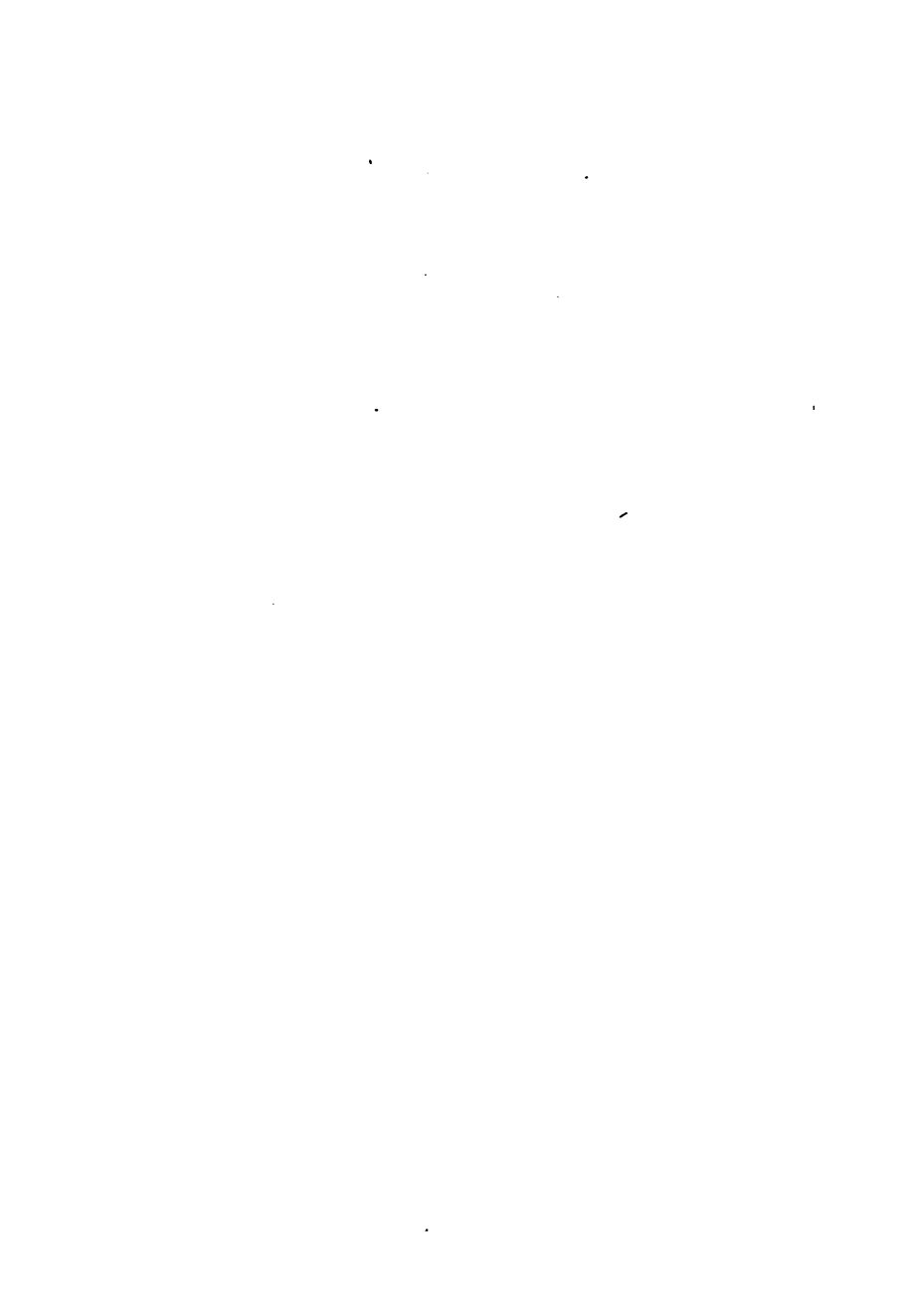
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autumn, since age cannot wither or custom stale the variety of her charm.

There is no safeguard so potent as purity. Before Una the lion crouched; and the girl whose heart is pure need fear no foe and no rudeness. I am in no haste to see a girl like this enter the gate of matrimony, no matter how great be her married glory. The unmatched sweetness of girlhood can never again be hers. Let her June be long!







**YOUNG BEAUX AND OLD  
BACHELORS.**



**YOUNG BEAUX AND OLD  
BACHELORS.**





### YOUNG BEAUX AND OLD BACHELORS.

THE line of demarcation between “eligibles” and “detrimentals” is not so sharply drawn in America as in England, for the very good reason that the “detrimental” of this year is quite likely to become the “eligible” of the next. In England a younger son who has no fortune of his own, and who has manifested no remarkable genius in any direction, is considered decidedly a “detrimental.” He is an alarming neighbor, at whose approach all wise mammas gather in their pretty daughters as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, unless indeed he be the younger son of a noble house. In that case his good

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blood and good breeding have a decided market value in certain directions, and the father of many a pretty girl will be glad to pay for them a large part of the fortune he himself has made in brewing or baking.

In America what is most in demand is capacity. Most American fathers value the evident capacity to succeed in business and to make a fortune quite as highly as they do an inherited competence; and the young man who has shown that he can get on and who has already made for himself a place is not regarded as a "detrimental." In the Eastern States, at least, where, in Massachusetts alone, there are thirty thousand more women than men, the position of a prosperous and unmarried young man is a very pleasant one. He is as welcome everywhere as flowers are in January.

He is a joy forever, whether he is a thing of beauty or not; and if he is handsome and distinguished-looking, his life is as sur-

rounded by pleasant things, and he is as much sought and courted as any pretty girl of them all. He is in request for parties, he must lead the german, and beauty wears for him her brightest smiles and her prettiest gowns.

This is his danger. The mocking-bird, who sings every other bird's song so well, has no song of its own; and the fine young man who suns himself in so many smiles now and then forgets to choose, and finds himself before he knows it getting to be an old beau, with the habit of society upon him and the habit of home unformed. The handsome and prosperous young man in society is perhaps the happiest of human creatures. He is better off than his pretty sister, because he has the privilege of choice, and like the prince in the fairy story can say, "Come thou along with me" to whomever he will. But I believe that for the young man of society to become an old



beau is just as sad a thing as for the prettiest rosebud to feel that she is overblown.

The perception of his lessening social value is longer in coming to him, no doubt; but he sees it, at last, in the inattentive glance that roves beyond him when he comes nigh the beauty of the season; in the occasional omission of his name from a party of young people; even in the greater freedom with which girls are confided to his care, as if he were no longer dangerous. Then is his soul filled with bitterness, and he begins to say to himself that the seasons have grown cold, and his heart is lonely.

Perhaps he honestly tries to fall in love and finds it impossible; and that is a far more pathetic thing than even to love in vain. To have flitted so long from flower to flower, that rose and lily and pink have each an equal charm, and not one can hold his fancy more than another, that is a sad

fate for a bee who should long ago have begun to store up honey for his life's winter.

The old beau looks about him and sees his contemporaries buying houses and leading their children by the hand, and he scoffs a little perhaps, and tries to think that he is glad not thus to be bored and burdened. But his laughter is hollow, and when he goes home at night and sits before his lonesome fire, he sees in the firelight glow the long-lost Spanish castle, of which he threw away the key in his youth, and fancies what might have been if youth had but known.

"Is there any moral to that?" asks the sauciest young voice over my shoulder; and I am awake again, for I too had begun to dream.

Yes, my infant, a moral there is. Roses belong to June, and you cannot gather them under the skies of November.

Since I believe a happy domestic life to be this world's best gift, I do not believe that the old beau can have the best of life, unless by some rare chance he find the four-leaved clover of luck and love growing out of season and gather it. But if he is contented to wear his bachelor's button frankly and easily, and to take the goods the gods still provide him, he may yet be a very agreeable member of society. The man who at fifty believes himself to be twenty-five is as incongruous and uncomfortable a spectacle as the woman who at forty appears to have forgotten that she is more than eighteen; but there is nothing undignified in the position of the spinster who has frankly accepted her single life, or of the bachelor who takes his middle-aged pleasures cheerfully, and no longer aspires to lead the german or to break hearts. I have one such example in my mind, and with—

“A merrier man,  
Within the limits of becoming mirth,  
I never spent an hour’s talk withal.”

He likes his game of whist, and he is a winning and delightful partner to the women who are old enough to play well, — winning in a double sense of the word. He is full of pleasant surprises for his acquaintances; he gives the most charming of little parties; he takes one friend for a drive; he finds a long-sought book for another; he always manages to do the right thing at the right time. I have even known him to chance to bring the loveliest hot-house flowers to a country dinner-party in December, and thus enchant the hostess who was grieving over the non-fulfilment of her own order to a city florist. He has the supreme good fortune to know how to make himself agreeable; and instead of pitying him because his fireside is lonely, his friends are selfishly a little rejoiced at it because they can, by

reason of that loneliness, lure him more frequently to their own.

But I am speaking of a very rare man,—scholar and gentleman, the very pink of courtesy and a fellow of infinite jest. To be all this, and therefore perennially acceptable, would scarcely be so easy of achievement to most men as to marry, and thus secure for themselves a family circle, of which, as Artemus Ward observed, they may be “it, principally.”

It must be an exceptionally fine man, or an exceptionally charming and attractive woman, who can pass middle age unmarried and escape that flippant pity, that toleration consciously kind, which wounds while it strives to heal. But the world is gentler to our misfortunes than to our follies; and Dr. Holmes laughed his cynical and yet not ungenial laugh at his maiden aunt, not because her curls were wintry, but because she twined them still “in such a spring-

like way." To be a young bachelor in society is to be the king of the hour, and to hold the cup of life to one's lips bubbling with pleasure and beaded with success; to be an old beau — an elderly man about town — is to have drunk off the bubbles, indeed, and to have reached the dregs. But if, instead of an old beau, a man elects to step aside from the ranks of those who wait on woman's favor to be the friend of his peers, the counsellor of the young fellows who come after him, the faithful knight in whom all womanhood finds its champion, — to him the world is full of noble uses and serene joys; and if he has missed the keenest bliss of youth, he may possess the noblest serenity of age, and at least rejoice that what he has never won he cannot lose.





## MOTIVES FOR MARRIAGE.







## MOTIVES FOR MARRIAGE.

I HAVE been turning over the leaves of an old book, written before I was born, and which was familiar to my childhood, and I have come upon the following extremely sensible remark: —

“What a pity it is that the thousandth chance of a gentleman's becoming your lover should deprive you of the pleasure of a free, unembarrassed, intellectual intercourse with the single men of your acquaintance !”

The pity of it is that the Girl of the Period so often has no desire for this unembarrassed and sensible friendship, and values the men she knows only in proportion as they minister to her pleasure or her

vanity. And this superficial and unreal valuation prevents her from getting honestly and thoroughly acquainted with any man, — from seeing him as he is seen by his own womankind, or as he would show himself in the stress and strain of real life, with its vital interests and stern realities, when the heyday and play-day of youth should be over.

That any other motives should enter into marriage than that noble and well-founded love which can safely promise to be faithful unto death — because to be unfaithful would be as impossible to it as for a mother's heart to turn from her child — is one of the saddest features of our boasted civilization; but we see interested and mercenary marriages every day, and it would be idle to say they were the rare exception. If all girls and all young men could be impressed, not only with the sacredness of marriage, but with a profound sense of

its importance in the growth of character, its influence, for good or evil, on their whole natures and their whole careers, they would be less ready to enter into its obligations carelessly, and we should see less of the frivolity of flirtation, the vulgarity of husband-seeking.

To my thinking, Love is the most sacred of Heaven's gifts, and should be waited for as reverently as the descent of the Holy Ghost. Matrimony may, indeed, be a means of grace, even when it is as unhappy as was the marriage of that pair on whose tombstone, in a New Hampshire churchyard, appreciative neighbors sculptured, for epitaph, —

“THEIR WARFARE IS OVER,” —

but surely matrimony should never be entered into as a means of livelihood. The woman who deliberately marries for money has something to boast over her “un-

classed" sisters of the *demi-monde* in propriety, but little in principle.

Some blunders will, of course, be made in the purest good faith. Plenty of foolish girls will mistake for love their own enjoyment of admiration and pleasure in being loved, and plenty of young men will mistake for something sacred and eternal the transient stir of fancy awakened by a pretty face or a taking manner. If marriages are born of these delusions, the error is to be pitied and not despised; yet from the life-long penalty of such a blunder can no man or woman hope wholly to escape. Though the best joys of life may thus have been lost, its burdens can still be borne with dignity, while self-respect remains unchallenged. But can that girl respect herself who deliberately, and of set purpose, tries to attract a man simply because he is a good match; or that young man who seeks a girl because through her he hopes

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to add to his own resources by some gain in family, or wealth, or political influence?

It is to the "marriage of true minds" that Shakspeare bids us to "admit no impediments;" and it is only such a marriage — born, on either side, of the perception of and love for the inmost soul of the real human creature to whom one is drawn by force of spiritual and mental attraction — that has any claim on our admiration, however we may accord to a more imperfect bond our pardon or our pity.

Were this lofty ideal of marriage constantly kept before the minds of young people as the only desirable thing, I think society would be immeasurably dignified by it. A girl with Una-like purity and that sensitive perception of truth and refinement which belongs to purity would never be sufficiently attracted by a false and evil man to be in danger of harm from the association; and the young man, however

unskilled in the world's wiles, who held in his heart a shy and sacred worship for that "not impossible she," who could really command the homage of his mind and soul, would be as safe as Sir Galahad from any Fay Vivian of them all.

But what of the undeveloped and unaspiring minds and souls who have hardly discovered that they have any mental or spiritual needs, but who know very well that they have human hearts to need comfort, human longings to fulfil? Shall they be shut out from love and marriage because they cannot talk about ethics, and are hardly aware that they have any intellects at all?

By no means. As Browning says in "Evelyn Hope," "delayed it may be, for more lives yet, ere the time be come" for them to live completely, but at least it is in their power to live sincerely. They know the difference between love and in-

terest; they know whether this woman or this man is honestly nearer and dearer than all the rest of the world; whether they are seeking a mate by reason of absolute, inherent attraction, or for any worldly, and therefore unworthy, motive whatever. There have been noble and honorable and faithful marriages often enough among people who could not write their own names, but whose hearts were absolutely loyal and sound to the core.

Marriage, it seems to me, should be waited for, not sought. Who knows round what corner his destiny may be hiding,—at what unexpected turn he may come upon the face above all faces for him? To put aside as far as possible the thought of marriage until compelled to think of it by some strong and special attraction toward some special person, is wiser than to be seeking in every chance acquaintance the possible husband or wife. "We shall meet



the people who are coming to meet us," no matter in what far-off land their journey toward us begins.

Perhaps parents are more to blame for worldly marriages than we are apt to think. How constantly we hear the term "married well" applied, not to character or congeniality or true fitness, but to a comfortable income. And yet there is something to be said for "the stern parent" of the novels, with his "hard facts." The old adage that "when poverty comes in at the door love flies out of the window" is true only of small and poor natures,—natures incapable of a great love; but it is nevertheless true that to be loved it is necessary to be lovely, and that it is far more difficult to be lovely when we are hard pressed by want and rendered fretful by care and overwork. Human creatures cannot build their nests as inexpensively as the birds do; and not even the scant hospitality of homestead

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eaves or orchard boughs awaits their fledglings. To marry for money, or for any object whatever save and except immortal and all-powerful Love, is to perjure and debase the human heart; but to marry without some provision for the future, such as money, or money's worth in a well-furnished mind and a capacity for skilled labor, is to defy common sense and invoke the evil fates.





## ENGAGEMENTS.





## ENGAGEMENTS.

I HAVE spoken of the only true and right motive for marriage, and ventured to air my own opinion that marriage should not be too eagerly sought by either sex, but rather waited for until the certainty has come that one loves worthily and well. I mean that for a man to say to himself, in cold blood, that it is time he should marry, and for that reason to look about for a wife,—instead of being aware that he loves and therefore desires to marry the one beloved woman,—is to my thinking as unwise and in almost as poor taste as for a girl to discover that it is time she were settled in life, and in consequence to set about trying to attract

a husband. In neither case is happiness in marriage likely to be the result of such a quest.

But let us suppose that a man's heart has really been touched, and he honestly believes that he has seen the one woman who could insure his happiness and make his life complete,—then, I think he may still be in danger of imperilling his success by too great rashness. It is true that a girl does not like a timid or cowardly wooer; but if she be the “perfect woman, nobly planned,” whom the poets have taught us to desire, she is not to be taken by storm, and a man must give her time to know her own mind. She must have found in her own girlish heart the “yes” he craves before he question her too rudely; or he may receive, instead, a “no” which might have ripened into “yes” under fostering and delaying suns.

There is no danger that he will not show

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what he feels without direct words, even were he ever so much resolved to keep silence. There is an atmosphere about love which makes itself felt. "All the world loves a lover," wrote Emerson; and, by the way, no one has more fully expressed the beauty and mystery of love than this same philosopher of Concord, who stands to so many for a sort of severe incarnation of abstract thought, instead of what he was,—a lofty human soul instinct with the fullest life of humanity. "All the world loves a lover;" and our lover, whose lips are still silent, speaks none the less eloquently in a thousand varying ways.

As a rule, a delicate woman does not think of a man as a lover, or even know whether she could care for him in that capacity or not, until she has received some impression of his special interest in her. Then she begins to consider him. Does a long talk with him bore or delight her?



Does she find herself talking to him freely, or entertaining him with an effort? Is the festive occasion from which he is absent robbed of some portion of its brightness? Does she "see *his* face, all faces among"—catch his voice, though a dozen are speaking? Then, unconsciously, do her cheeks begin to glow at his coming. In her eyes smiles a welcome, timid yet sweet; and the reverent, waiting lover may speak safely, for his time has come.

He has a theory, perhaps, that he should first ask her father's consent to address her, but it is one of those theories mostly kept for show and seldom acted upon. The man who really loves is most likely to be surprised by some unexpected opportunity,—to speak before he quite knows what words are on his tongue. Then, should fortune have favored his suit, he goes to the dreaded paternal interview strengthened for the ordeal—the bad half-hour that it means

to most men — by the knowledge that he is beloved.

It is a debatable question how far a father has a right to refuse his consent to a prayer to which his daughter has said amen. If she is too young to know her own mind, he may, surely, insist on delay. If there is anything really wrong and ignoble in a suitor's character, he will point it out and use his influence and even his authority — so far as authority in such a case can avail — to prevent the marriage. But if it is a mere question of personal prejudice or of worldly policy, and a girl is old enough to be quite sure of herself, it seems to me that a parent has hardly a right to interfere, and that a daughter is not compelled to accept a decision based upon prejudice or ambition.

On the other hand, a girl cannot too carefully consider the objections made by her father. It is not probable that a parent

who has filled his daughter's life with proofs of love and devotion will seek to cross her in the dearest wish of her heart, without what seem to him good reasons; and to an unprejudiced mind it seems quite possible that a man of fifty should be as good a judge of character and of mutual suitability and the chances for happiness as a girl of twenty.

Yet, when all has been said, "the soul has certain inalienable rights, and the first of these is love;" and where love is true and strong, I do not believe that any parent has a right to cross it save on account of some grave defect of moral character. "Gods and men" would justify a father who should refuse his daughter to a gambler or a drunkard, or a man of known evil life in any direction. She herself would doubtless live to be grateful; or if she died, it were better to die unstained by such an association.

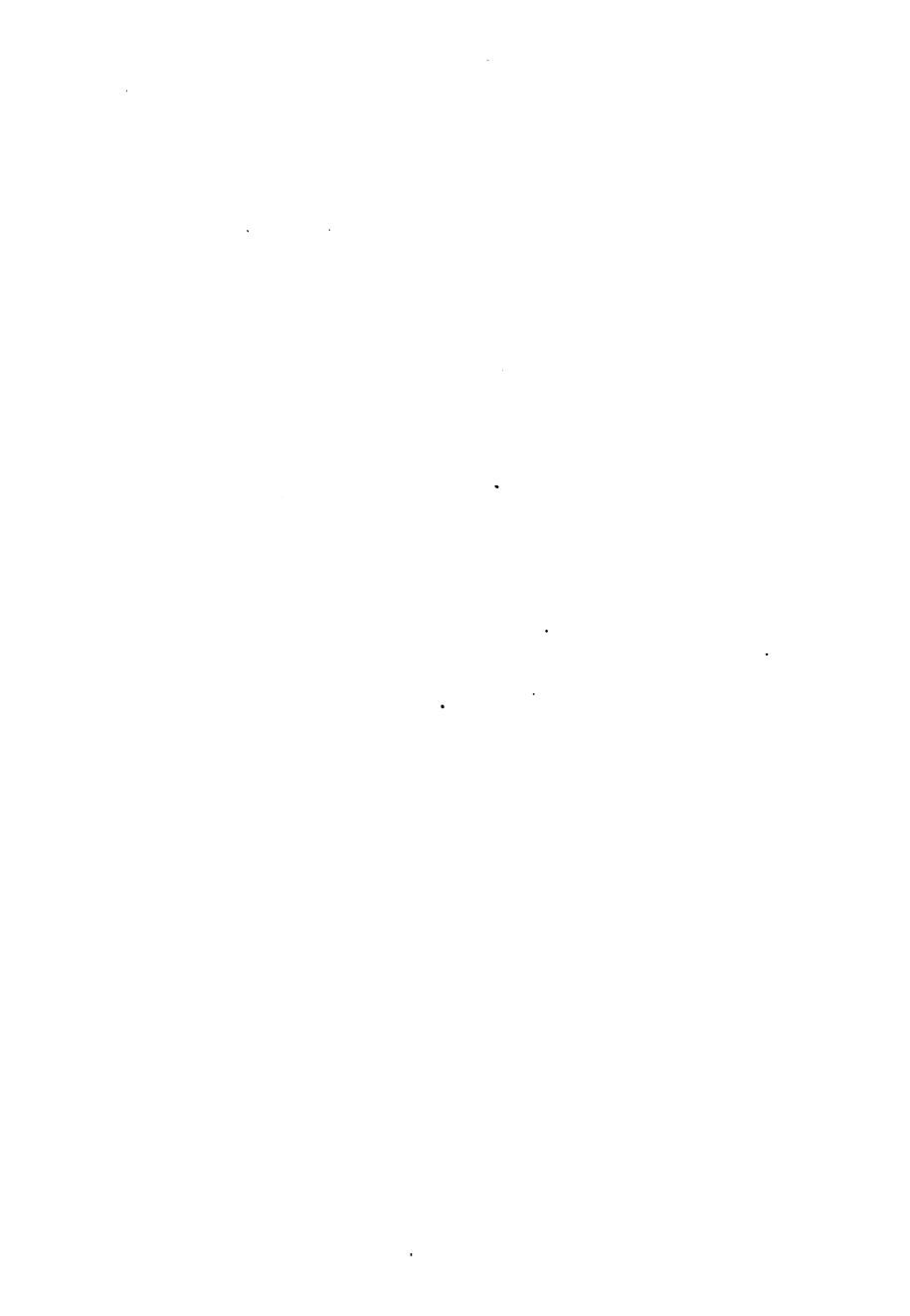
Let us consider the happier cases, in which the course of true love meets with no such formidable obstacles, where parents have consented and friends approved and all goes merry as a marriage bell.

Then let the betrothed pair beware lest love should become what a French cynic has called it,—“selfishness for two.” Surely the influence of a great and holy joy should be to enlarge the heart and ennoble the life. Surely to be very happy should make one more tender to the sorrowful. There is a great temptation to lovers to withdraw themselves from other interests, to make the parents and brothers and sisters who have loved a girl all her life feel that they are no longer necessary to her; that her heart is gone from them while her presence is in their midst. But it would be a nobler love, and one that, to my thinking, would promise more for future happiness, which should only hold the old ties more nearly and dearly

because of this new one dearer than them all; which would be sedulous to spare the home circle any slight, any sense of loss, beyond the inevitable one of parted presence. Love is the best gift of God, but it should be crowned with honor,—a sovereign who exalts his subjects, not a tyrant who debases them. If I were a man I would prefer to marry a girl who would be careful in no least thing to hurt or slight the home hearts she was leaving, who could afford to wait a little even for her happiness rather than grasp it with unseemly eagerness.

I am old-fashioned, you think? No, even now I know of such a love in two young lovers for whom every wind blows good fortune, yet who pause on the threshold of the new, bright life to leave tender memories of their sweet thoughtfulness in the life behind them.

**YOUNG GIRLS AND MARRIAGE.**





## YOUNG GIRLS AND MARRIAGE.

A CERTAIN sense of embarrassment attends any attempt to give my views as to the age at which girls ought to marry, from the fact that I know of no subject on which it would seem to me more impossible to generalize with any degree of satisfaction. You remember the famous recipe for hare soup,—“First catch your hare”? I should be inclined to say,—“First show me your girl;” for there can be no doubt that some girls are mentally, morally, and physically better fitted to marry at twenty than others at twenty-five.

If indeed one must generalize as to whether early or late marriages are pref-



erable, I should certainly say that more girls are capable of a wise choice at twenty-five than at twenty; and that nine tenths of our girls would doubtless be happier should they wait until the maturer period. Two considerations would influence me to a preference for marriage late rather than early. In the first place, there is the certainty that a girl of any brains would know a great deal better what she really needed, by way of companionship through life, at twenty-five than she could possibly know at twenty. In the second place, I would fain secure to girls the natural, healthful delights of girlhood,—that time when the bud has not quite opened to the sun, and holds at heart the morning's freshness. And yet the remembrance of certain girl brides, full of hope and trust, and entering on the new life with the fresh enthusiasm of girlhood, constrains me to wonder whether something may not be lost from

the glory of love when the glory of youth is past.

In the two very happiest marriages I can just now call to mind, one wife married at the age of twenty-eight, the other at that of thirty. And these marriages seem to me ideally perfect. To these happy pairs would apply my favorite quotation from "Jane Eyre," where Jane says, after her marriage with Rochester, "For us to be together is to be as free as in solitude, as gay as in company." But I would be very far from deducing from these two ideal marriages the conclusion that a young woman should not marry under the mature age of twenty-eight.

In this great world full of men and women no two faces are precisely alike, no two hearts alike, no two destinies. The Creator of that human nature, from the very divergence of which romance becomes possible, never repeats Himself; and the

decision which would be wise for one person must naturally be unwise for another. But one thing is indisputable, and that is that no man or woman ought to marry until he or she is sufficiently mature to be reasonably certain that the companionship prized to-day will not get to seem, ten or twenty years later on, as the unwelcome ghost of a past folly.

It is certainly not wise that the general run of marriages should be as early now as they might well have been two or three generations ago. In the time of Jonathan Edwards he was not the only man who was prepared for college at thirteen, and had left it before he was eighteen. Such precocity was by no means uncommon. Formerly the education of a well-schooled young lady used to be completed at say sixteen or eighteen, while now twenty-two is the average age at which the young women of Wellesley College, for instance, take

their degree. We should at least give a girl time enough to lock up her diploma and rest from her own examinations before she is called on to examine the claims of some young man to be her suitor.

The one supremely important thing in marriage seems to me to be that the contracting parties should be sufficiently advanced to know what they are doing, and to have reasonable ground for believing that the judgment of their maturity will not condemn the choice of their youth. This certainly would come earlier in some stages of civilization than in others. Quiet, unambitious country folk, in districts remote from innovation, may marry at a very early age with safety. Such as they are, they are likely to continue to be; and the man who tills his own acres, and has no ambition beyond them, will be far happier to find some cheery young helpmate in the home to which he returns at nightfall; nor

is it at all likely that either husband or wife will live to regret such an early choice.

At the other extreme of the social scale, also, early marriages seem reasonable and desirable. When people have been born into an atmosphere of luxury and culture, when both parties to the marriage contract have inherited the traditions of gentle breeding, neither is likely to shock or outgrow the other as time goes on.

The terrible danger is in the early marriage of people in a transition state, when, before the wings have sprung from the shoulders of Pegasus, he may be mated all unknowingly with the plodding plough-horse. Unshared aspirations, unshared tastes, unshared acquisitions, — these are fatal to conjugal happiness. I know, for instance, a man in high official position, educated largely by contact with the world, by the very duties that have devolved on him and the attrition of every day's experiences,

whose pretty, empty-headed wife must shock him by her very accent every time she opens her lips. He does his duty manfully, this man,—but does any one suppose he would not be happier with a different wife?

I know women also, women of keen intellect, and of both scholarly and social culture, who are married to men whom time has not improved or enlarged,—women who think their own thoughts and live their own solitary lives in a world of which the man whom they married before they knew themselves or their own needs does not even know the language. Short of crime, I think the world holds nothing sadder or more tragic than such unequal mating. As Amiel says, in his wonderful *Journal Intime*, “an irreparable evil brought about by one’s self,—a renunciation for life of liberty, of peace of mind,—the very thought of it is maddening.”

It is perhaps a mistake to pity most the one who is generally most commiserated in these ill-fated unions; for the one who has the highest range of possibilities, and the most intimate and exquisite need of sympathy, has also the most resources. Friends warm to him, books speak to him, the whole world of ideal beauty is ready to help him to forget the unsatisfying Real; but what shall console the duller mate whose one hope of warmth was in the nest of home? And yet it is no light thing for the man who aspires and struggles and achieves, or the woman who studies and dreams, to be bereft of that keen sympathy, that blessed oneness in marriage, which, to the heart at once true and tender, seems worth all other things put together. Contemplating the lives which some sad fatality of early choice has wrecked, one feels inclined, on the whole, to preach the gospel of delay; to say to one and all — Wait!

At least wait until you know yourselves and your own needs, and can be reasonably sure that no day will come when you will ask yourself, in sad wonder, Is it possible that I am the same person who once believed that in this yoke-fellow I had found my soul's mate?







AFTER MARRIAGE.





## AFTER MARRIAGE.

THERE is danger of interpreting too literally the old, worn-out quotation, —

“Two souls with but a single thought —

Two hearts that beat as one.”

The two souls that had but a single thought would be very narrow souls indeed, and the chances are that they would speedily get tired of that single thought. A honeymoon may fitly be a moon for two only; and I like the English fashion of going off to pass it in some quiet spot, better than the American one of “Their Wedding Journey,” when the trunks and their contents are alike new, and every detail speaks of the recent ceremony. But even a wed-

ding journey may be a season of sweet and sacred isolation; and there is, perhaps, something in the very restraint that travel imposes upon tenderness which makes the end of each day's journey a special delight,—gives it something of the zest of meeting after parting.

Out of a lifetime, it is not too much to take this one bright, brief month for solitude *à deux*, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot." But after this moon of enchantment is over, and real life must begin, it is important to begin it with true theories instead of false ones.

It is true, no doubt, that two people who are not only married but mated *can* suffice for each other. They are not likely to weary of each other's society; their interests are one,—their hopes, their desires. They could go to the end of the world, if need were,—to India, to Australia, to the North Pole, if they could find their way

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there, and, having each other, be everywhere content. They could live for years as two very strong and real people, whom I happen to know, did live, in the midst of an absolutely alien and hostile community, and suffice to each other. But because they *could* do this, it does not follow that it is the best life.

One likes sometimes to read other poets than Shakspeare, though one would prefer him to any of his lesser brethren as the companion of years of captivity. It is a better and a healthier thing for two human creatures, even the most loving and the most beloved, to live to some degree among other people, — to interest themselves in other lives, and thus bring some variety into their own. A widowed mother said to me the other day, in speaking of a grown-up, unmarried daughter, from whom she had scarcely been separated in a dozen years, "We are so silent together that I half think

we shall lose the power of speech. We are in perfect sympathy, but our life has no new events, and we have talked the old ones over so many times. We know each other's faith, hopes, beliefs, experiences, as we know our own; so what is there to talk about?"

I can conceive that this same state of things might come to pass in a very happy and united marriage, if the married pair lived chiefly in solitude. Worse things than this might, of course, befall them. To lose their perfect understanding of each other would be far worse; but it would be a healthier life to be more associated with their fellows. To be too isolated is apt to induce that too easy familiarity which breeds, if not contempt, disenchantment.

And yet there is another danger not to be ignored in too intimate association with others. Jealousy, which somebody has called "the fond injustice of an unsatisfied heart," is a very real thing, and scarcely

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any gain could be a sufficient reward for making acquaintance with its tortures. Love ought to be exalted above these pains, — yes, just as the human constitution ought to be strong enough to secure it from a sudden cold, a chance indigestion. Unfortunately, as a matter of fact, neither mind nor body is proof against disease; and if a man or a woman loves truly and nobly, he or she will avoid the remotest possibility of inflicting the keen and cruel tortures of jealousy on the one who has given the whole devotion of heart and life.

There are persons to whom jealousy is so impossible that they have no patience with it in others; but this freedom from the emotion may have its root in two widely different qualities. It may arise from such absolute faith in the object beloved that the very thought which distrusted that person's entire and absolute affection would seem almost insulting; or it may come



from that overweening faith in one's own power to attract which can imagine no rival possible. Jealousy, on the other hand, may arise from a selfish, ungenerous, grudging spirit; or it may spring from a profound sense of the value of love, and a haunting doubt of one's own power to hold forever so great a treasure.

To state the case phrenologically—jealousy, where there is no especial, unmistakable cause and justification, is usually the result of small self-esteem and large approbateness. This combination implies a strong desire for love, united to a haunting doubt of one's own power to win and hold it, and is the fruitful and frequent parent of unfounded jealousy. Let the person who is the victim of this phrenological misfortune strive earnestly against the tendency it begets; but also let the husband or wife who has not been born to this evil inheritance of self-distrust be pitiful toward

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it, and understand that the misery it occasions is very real and bitter.

What if a man does feel perfectly sure that he can make a very intimate friend of some charming woman without the slightest danger to his good faith toward the wife he loves; yet if she cannot see the friendship in the same light, and finds in it occasion for the bitter tortures of jealousy, should it not seem to him a small sacrifice to abstain from it that she who loves him best may be spared such suffering? We cannot afford to treat those who are dear to us as if they were culprits whose weaknesses we had some special commission to punish. What if they do deserve this or that retribution, shall we be happier for having inflicted it? When the day comes on which the eyes we love are blind to all sights, the ears deaf to all sounds, and the lips from which we would crave a late pardon are dumb, shall we be happier to think

that we have been the sword of justice to this dead who was so dear?

I think one mistake into which women perhaps fall more frequently than men is that of expecting too much by way of what, for want of a better word, I will call love-making. Too much love, truth, tenderness, devotion we cannot expect. Those qualities are what a noble love means, — its spirit and its essence; but the continued lover-like expression of love belongs to the unrestful days of wooing, or the half-acquaintanceship of early marriage. There comes a time to men when the dearest and holiest things are rather lived than spoken, and the woman makes a mistake who feels herself unloved because the fervors of early utterance are absent from the speech of her husband.

One of the ablest novels of Swinburne's favorite novelist, Mrs. Lynn Linton, is "Under which Lord." I do not mean to indorse its theories or to deny a cruel one-sidedness

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in the harsh portrait of the ritualist "Superior;" but the book is simply masterly when regarded as the character-study of a weak but loving woman. Hermione loved her husband, but she could not understand his devotion, — deeper than life and stronger than death, — because it was silent. She longed for the diversion of sentimentality, the excitement of lovers' quarrels and reconciliations. Her husband, on the other hand, loved her with a love as much deeper than words as the silent, fathomless pool is deeper than the wayside brook that babbles as it goes. And because the deep waters do not sparkle fitfully in the sun, and because she has no line wherewith to fathom their profound stillness, Hermione's heart doubts the love which is too great for her shallower nature to comprehend, and she turns weakly to an attraction half religious and wholly sentimental, which pleases her fancy, but never for one moment satisfies her heart.

The lesson is a lesson for two, and is worth learning. Men should remember that women hunger for words, and not wait, as Carlyle did, to breathe their vain remorse and despair beside a grave; and women should understand that a man's truth is not to be measured by his professions, and that the deepest emotion is perhaps too often silent.

The only possible secrets between two married people should be those which are confided to either one of them by others. While some people, who call themselves worldly-wise, will laugh at the idea of such perfect confidence as this implies, others still, especially the newly-married, who have had small worldly experience, will be shocked that I should suggest the keeping of any kind of secret by either wife or husband from the other. I am not prepared to say that these last are not the wiser of the two.

case, when any confidence is

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proffered to either husband or wife, the recipient of it should make his or her position clearly understood.

Possibly there is a certain hardness toward old friends in requiring them either to dispense with the sympathy we have been wont to give them, or else to submit their weaknesses and trials to the cold judgment, the cynical consideration of a man or a woman who has for them no tender toleration born of loving intimacy. Yet it would be better to refuse ever to listen to another confidence while the world stands, than to receive a secret to keep when its custody would be wounding to the one whose happiness should be our first object. Some wives and some husbands are large-minded enough and free enough from jealousy not to be troubled by the knowledge that a confidence has been bestowed in which they cannot share, and then there can be no harm in such a confidence.

But no personal secret can fitly belong to one only of the two people of whom love and law have made one flesh. The very ideal of marriage had been realized by that old judge who had knelt for so many years to say a last prayer at night beside his wife that, when at last she had left him, his lips were dumb, and without her he could not even open his heart to God.

One frequent cause of trouble in married life is a want of openness in business matters. A husband marries a pretty, careless girl, who has been used to taking no more thought as to how she should be clothed than the lilies of the field. He begins by not liking to refuse any of her requests. He will not hint, so long as he can help it, at care in trifling expenses; he does not like to associate himself in her mind with disappointments and self-denials. And she, who would have been willing enough, in  
ness to please of her girlish

love, to give up any whims or fancies of her own whatever, falls into habits of careless extravagance, and feels herself injured when at last a remonstrance comes. How much wiser would have been perfect openness in the beginning.

"We have just so much money to spend this summer. Now, shall we arrange matters thus, or thus?" was the question I heard a very young husband ask his still younger bride not long ago; and all the womanhood in her answered to this demand upon it, and her help at planning and counselling proved not a thing to be despised, though hitherto she had "fed upon the roses and lain among the lilies of life." I am speaking not of marriages that are no marriages,—where Venus has wedded Vulcan because Vulcan prospered at his forge,—but marriages where two true hearts have set out together, for love's sake, to learn the lessons of life, and to live together till death shall



part them. And one of the first lessons for them to learn is to trust each other entirely. The most frivolous girl of all "the rosebud garden of girls," if she truly loves, acquires something of womanliness from her love, and is ready to plan and help and make her small sacrifices for the general good. Try her, and you will see.

But if you fail to tell her just how much you have, and just what portion of it can properly be spent, and what portion should be saved for that nest-egg in which her interest is not less than your own, then you cannot justly blame her if she is careless and self-indulgent, and wastes to-day to want to-morrow.

There are thousands of little courtesies, also, that should not be lost sight of in the cruel candor of marriage. The secret of a great social success is to wound no one's self-love. The same secret will go far toward making marriage happy. Many a

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woman who would consider it an unpardonable rudeness not to listen with an air of interest to what a mere acquaintance is saying, will have no least scruple in showing her husband that his talk wearies her. Of course the best thing is when talk does *not* weary, — when two people are so unified in taste that whatever interests the one is of equal interest to the other; but this cannot always be the case, even in a happy marriage; and is it not better worth while to take the small trouble of paying courteous attention to the one who depends on you for his daily happiness than even to bestow this courtesy on the acquaintances to whom it is a transient pleasure to seem agreeable?

I wish there were professors of tact, and that it were at least as much a part of a girl's education as is music or French. George Eliot, strong-brained, large-hearted woman that she was, possessed this gift of

tact in an unexampled degree in her relations with the man whose love and homage were the delight and solace of so many years of her life. I have seen them together, and I have seen her air of delighted interest when he spoke, of anxiety to hear anything to which he called her attention. I have been told by those who possessed the happiness of her intimate acquaintance that she never argued any point directly with Mr. Lewes. If he made some remark with which she disagreed, her gentle voice would take up the thread of talk with that air of gracious deference which so well became her.

“Yes, there is great force in what you say, but don’t you think also,”—and then would come her own idea of the subject under discussion, put forward as a question, a suggestion, never with the positiveness of an assertion. And if women only knew it, and men also, to question is,

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with the average human being, by far a surer method of success than to argue. To argue puts the other side at once upon the defensive. We cling with a certain element of passion to whatever thing is assailed, whether it be our character, our property, or our opinions. If, on the other hand, we are met only by some truth-seeking question, some gentle suggestion of possibilities, we begin to ask questions of ourselves in our turn, and are very likely open to a change of opinion.

If I were marshalling in battle array the foes to domestic peace, I should give to a love of argument, on either side, at least the rank of a brigadier-general.

Ideality is a good housemate. That love lasts longer, as well as reaches higher, which idealizes its object; yet there is one dangerous direction which ideality may take. If it deceive us into the belief that we are wedding perfection, then the revelation of

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human infirmities, which is an inevitable consequence of all marriage, comes upon us with a shock which is sometimes perilous to contentment. The best antidote for this rude shock would be a little wholesome self-examination. The vainest of us can scarcely cherish a secret belief in our own perfection. We realize in ourselves, when we look within, the very faults of which we are most intolerant in others. It is nearly six thousand years since, according to Genesis, the sons of God came down to woo the daughters of men. As, since then, it is only one imperfect human creature who woos and weds another, why should we hesitate to extend to others the grace we are so certain to require? Do we fear to love too much? Yet,—

“ Was never true love loved in vain,  
For truest love is highest gain ; ”

and to love even the unthankful and the evil, not because they are unthankful and

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evil, but because they are human, is to draw near to the divine.

Above all things, therefore, let those who would find in earthly marriage heavenly delight and life-long sweetness, learn that to love—which includes all good things—includes forgiveness of sins and gentleness of judgment.





**A STATUTE OF LIMITATION.**







## A STATUTE OF LIMITATION.

I HAVE received a letter which singularly interests me. "Plenty of advice is given," says the writer, "to the happy people" whose marriages have been made in heaven, and who need only tender and fostering care to preserve the heavenly atmosphere amid the chances and changes of earthly life; but"—and I will quote the words of the letter, since they put the writer's point very forcibly—"there are cases, and, alas! they are not rare, in which the twain, instead of becoming one flesh, remain most decidedly and distinctly two, and in which the only possibility of their becoming one must consist in the debasement of the nobler

character to something like the grade of the lower. How far, then, should this yielding up of one's best self for the sake of peace and union with one's nearest and most constant companion be carried? I yield," the letter-writer continues, "to no one in my ideal of what married life *should* be; but I know too sadly well what too often it really *is*. I have seen instances in which a naturally noble, generous, upright nature has been warped by an overbearing, grasping, selfish, and jealous one until its native characteristics seemed almost extinguished. Should there not be a limit to a self-devotion and self-sacrifice which would result in spiritual, moral, mental, and social degeneracy? Those who are inclined to demand the utmost yielding up of another's temporal and intellectual interests and pleasures, who require as their right the subjugation, in that other, of every native impulse and desire, who claim every thought,

and would sit in judgment on every act, are the very ones who, on their own side, abuse and debase the relation whose rights they are so strenuous to maintain. For such cases as these should there not be a Statute of Limitation?"

It seems to me that the writer of this letter has set forth one of the most perplexing problems of married life. If people married rightly,—if all marriages were founded, as they should be, on mutual fitness and that perfect love which many waters cannot quench neither can the floods drown,—there would be no such discordant unions as those to which my correspondent refers. But to answer her question by saying that such marriages ought not to exist, would be as idle as it would be for a physician, summoned to the bedside of a suffering patient, to say, "Yes, but you should not *be* ill; health, not sickness, is the true law of life." Unfor-

tunately a large part of the human race *is* ill, in one way or another, and a large number of the married people in the world are certainly not mated.

“Thou shalt lower to his level day by day,  
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with  
clay,”

predicts Tennyson, in “Locksley Hall,” of pretty Cousin Amy, prudently “married to a clown;” and surely spiritual and mental deterioration is the worst fate that can befall a human being, and to avert it by whatever honest means is a duty to one’s own soul.

There is a higher law than the obedience that one promises in marriage, and that is obedience to the eternal commands of Right. If a husband requires his wife to steal or to lie, though the civil law may condone her offence because of her subjection to her legal lord, is there an honest man or woman who will not admit that she

ought to have disobeyed and defied him? And so, if he would influence her to be unkind, harsh, suspicious, ungenerous, it seems to me equally to be her duty to live up — not defiantly, but quietly and resolutely — to her own standard of right; and I believe, since God and one human soul must always be a majority, that nine times out of ten the result of such a quiet, resolute, fearless life would be to raise the husband, and not to debase the wife.

But it is not always, by any means, the wife who is in danger of being lowered to her husband's level; the opposite case is by no means infrequent. Alas! have we not all seen men who were naturally chivalrous and high-minded become gossiping, censorious, and ungenerous through constant association with narrow-brained, shallow-natured, yet strong-willed women whom they for some reason have loved? It is because this influence of constant associa-

tion in marriage is at once so subtle and so potent, that such infinite care is necessary to marry well. Do you suppose that Lydgate, in "Middlemarch," could ever be the same man he might have been had he married a woman like Dorothea instead of a woman like Rosamond? Could one be associated daily and nightly with Becky Sharpe and escape her influence if in any sense, however unworthy, one loved her?

But grant that the mistake *has* been made,—that Lydgate has married Rosamond, or that some white-souled lily of a woman has blindly married a man who is of the earth earthy, and to whom what she calls honor is a jest,—what then?

The one only character which any of us can surely calculate on controlling or affecting is our own; and since the most important thing on earth is character,—not reputation, but character; not what is said of us, but what we are,—we have no

right to throw down its defences for whatever cause.

“ To thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

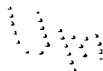
Peace is dear indeed; and one would fain sit tranquilly among the household gods, whatever wild winds may blow outside; but there is something still better and higher than peace. If, as I believe, the life we live here is but one chapter in the soul's history, what peace or pleasantness, even of marriage, can make up for the degradation of this immortal part of us, whose highest aspiration is to “go on, and not to die”? No gain, in marriage or out of it, can compensate the soul for being false to its own ideal, disobedient to the upward-calling voice. But there is in this view of things one danger of which we should take account. Let us beware of mental or spiritual self-conceit; of think-



ing ourselves better than another simply because we are different; of fancying our standard purer and more lofty than it really is. Before we persuade ourselves that wife or husband is a clod of the valley, "the grossness of whose nature shall have weight to drag us down," would it not be well to be quite sure where we ourselves stand; whether the divergence which seems to us so formidable is really of principle or only of taste; whether the selfishness we condemn has not been detected through the alchemy of a corresponding selfishness in ourselves; whether our real desire is that Right should triumph, or that we should have our own way?

Sacrifice of justice and honor and loyalty—of what is highest and best in us—can never be right; but there is scarcely any form of mere self-sacrifice which may not be blest abundantly; nor is the human degraded by truly loving even the

unworthy. To love Evil itself is one thing—to love the victims of Evil is quite another. One of the best women I ever knew once said to me: "What a poor thing it is that we, so full of imperfection ourselves, should feel injured and resentful when we find imperfections in those we love; as if love itself were not its own exceeding great reward, and as if the human soul were not ennobled and enriched by its own love, however needy and deficient might be the object on which it is lavished."





**MARRIED PEOPLE IN SOCIETY.**





## MARRIED PEOPLE IN SOCIETY.

THERE is a great change in these days from the feasts our grandmothers remember, in country neighborhoods, — at which a man and his wife were always decorously seated side by side, — to the society of to-day, where a husband is supposed to take leave of his wife for the evening as he enters a drawing-room, and only to remember her existence again when they rise to return home.

Certainly nothing can be more out of taste than a parade of conjugality in public; and certainly if a husband and wife wish to converse with each other, or to sit side by side in that sympathy so close that

words are hardly needed, they can do so much more conveniently and with much less trouble at home. The object of going out into the world is, having squeezed dry one's own domestic orange, to find one abroad of fresh flavor. Two people who depend solely upon each other for society for a length of time do not necessarily love each other the less for that reason. Very likely, instead, they grow more and more necessary to each other with every secluded week. All the same, it must be owned that the average man and woman get their topics of conversation worn threadbare under these circumstances, and feel a curious tendency to go to sleep when dinner is over. It is a good thing for them to go out, were it only to have something fresh to talk about when they return.

To this end they must devote themselves to new people. The husband takes some other man's wife out to dinner or

supper, and the wife has an opportunity of seeing how books and politics and social topics in general impress a new person who has not told her all he thought so often that his very wisdom has grown meaningless. This is a benevolent scheme for giving the too-much-married a little vacation; but there may be such a thing as carrying this excellent theory too far.

Of course at a dinner-party the arrangements are inexorable. If a husband has the dullest wife in the room, whom yet he loves as men have been known to love dull women in spite of their dulness, he must resign himself to feel that the man she has been appointed to bore for two or three mortal hours will pity him, not knowing what a household blessing she is, or where the wings are hidden away underneath the silken shoulders of her best gown.

But at an evening party there is more freedom, and it is perhaps just a little shabby



of a man to leave the wife whom he well knows to be a good deal shy or a trifle heavy, to find a whole evening's amusement for herself.

There ought to be a code of minor social morals which would compel a man to look out of the corner of his eye and see not only whether his wife was well entertained but whether she was keeping one person too long because another failed to appear, or in any way was not quite at her ease, and to come to her rescue if anything were going wrong, and bring her some old friend of his own or some woman with whom she would have a common interest. To take a woman of the shy, domestic type, not much accustomed to society, into a gay assembly and leave her to look out for herself for a whole evening, is a sort of nameless cruelty quite unworthy of a man who loves his wife, or, let us say, of a gentleman, whether he greatly loves his wife or not; for though

love makes duties easy, the lack of it does not make them less binding.

I hold that in small things as well as in great a husband should be his wife's protector, and should ward off all annoyances from her as far as possible. I think that he should be for her a sort of special providence, and interpose himself as a shield between her and any possibility of annoyance. But the very essence of this care should be its unobtrusiveness, and it should be absolutely invisible to others.

Are we women, then, any more independent of the general voice? Not as a rule. Mrs. Carlyle knew what was in her husband long before the world found it out. She was his morning star and lighted him to the slow-coming dawn. But the ordinary woman, while she loves her husband with all her heart, is yet very apt to go to other people for her opinion of him. "People say that Henri writes beautiful poetry," said

Heine's foolish little French wife, and she was very proud of him for the poems she had never read; but it takes a wife who has an imagination as well as a heart to understand an uncomprehended great man; to wait for his sun to rise, as did Mrs. Carlyle, or to sit with him among his visions and take for prophecy what the contemporary world looks on as folly and delusion, as did the wife of William Blake. For common mortals it is a great comfort to be proud of those we love, to feel that the world also has found them out and crowned them, even though it be only with the brief roses of a pretty woman's garland.



**THE WISH TO RISE.**





### THE WISH TO RISE.

SOCIAL ambition must surely be reckoned as among the most powerful temptations that beset our society. The nineteenth-century Satan is extremely well dressed. He has the manners of a gentleman, and he takes those whom he would beguile up into the mountain of worldly prosperity and shows them all the possessions of this world and the glory of them. The defaulting cashier or bank president, or the book-keeper who makes false entries and enriches his own bank account at the expense of his employer's, will not be found among the disciples of plain living and high thinking. It is not science or poetry or art,

engrossing as these are, that leads a man into temptation. When an income of a little less than five hundred dollars came into the possession of the poet Wordsworth, he wrote to a friend that at last he was happy, since he had money enough for his needs, and could devote himself henceforth to the work which he loved. But if he had had petty social ambition, if his life had been at all in the abundance of goods which he possessed, we should have had no "Intimations of Immortality," no picture of Highland reaper or country maiden to whom the floating clouds had lent their state, and beauty born of murmuring sound its charm.

Not every one, however, can be poet or artist; and shall the man of business undervalue his own calling? By no means; and a legitimate business ambition is a thousand removes from the petty social ambition that leads men into temptation. To con-

trol great interests, to be the heart and soul of immense undertakings, — of railroads that span continents, or cables that unite them, — this is worthy of a man's endeavor. But the mere social ambition to live in luxury, to wear fine clothes, to entertain grand people, — this kind of ambition was never at the root of any noble deed, save as the worm that cankers it is at the root of the flower. Louis XII. of France said nobly that he would rather his courtiers should laugh at his economy than his people should weep at his extravagance; and this was a right royal sentiment, which is better worth remembering than most of the sayings of kings.

The moment a strong desire for social advancement seizes on a man or woman it commences to undermine the very foundations of character, and great shall be the fall thereof. "To keep up appearances," "to make a show," — one of these sentences



is only more vulgar than the other. The important thing is not to *appear* but to *be*. It is true, and pity 't is 't is true, that many people are shut out by limited and narrow fortunes from the society to which by right of taste and culture they should belong. But nothing proves more surely that they do *not* belong there than any attempt to force their way by means of shams. The grass is growing upon that grave in Sleepy Hollow where he lies who above all men protested against shams, — that seer of Concord whose mantle there is no one left to wear. He deprecated even the too hasty or importunate seeking of what seems to belong to us. In his immortal essay on "Friendship" he wrote: —

"You shall not come any nearer a man by getting into his house. If unlike, his soul only flees the faster from you, and you shall never  
    b a true glance of his eye. We see the  
        ~ and they repel us; why should  
            very late, we perceive that

no arrangements, no introductions, no habits of society would be of any avail to establish us in such relations with them as we desire, but solely the uprise of nature in us to the same degree it is in them; then shall we meet as water with water, and if we should not meet them we shall not want them, for we are already they."

In this last sentence, it seems to me, lies the true cure for all unworthy striving after position. If our steady purpose is, each one, to raise himself, his own mind and spirit, to the highest standard possible for him, he will not only be too busy to pursue shams and shadows, but he will be secure of perpetual good society, since he will be always with himself. I think it must be that the reason so many people dread solitude is that they do not like the undisguised self that confronts them in lonely hours, and shrink from its better acquaintance.

I have been betrayed into moralizing. I meant to speak of the vulgarity, the ill-

breeding of that kind of social ambition which leads people either to refrain from hospitality because they cannot have a French *chef* in their kitchens or Crown Derby and Sèvres upon their tables, or else to economize for weeks and make the whole household uncomfortable in order to give some grand entertainment of vulgar and unaccustomed amplitude. And it is the worst—or the best—of these shams that they are always failures; that there is about them the unmistakable savor of unaccustomedness, and thus they fail even of their own poor intention. We divine instantly whether the household is to this manner born, and we smile inwardly, yet if we are tender-hearted with a little pity in our laughter. But at the very simplest form of entertainment—the berries and milk of a wayside farm, the chops and fried potatoes of a bachelor's breakfast—we do not laugh. Well served and hospi-

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tably offered, they have all the sufficiency of a feast. May I quote Emerson again where he says: —

“I pray you, O excellent wife, not to cumber yourself and me to get a rich dinner for this man or this woman who has alighted at our gate, nor a bed-chamber made ready at too great a cost. These things they can get for a dollar in any village.”

Do not think that I undervalue the attraction of a table spread with the daintiest damask and covered with china and silver that it is a delight to behold. Where these appointments are suitable to the purse and common to the daily life of their owners, they make no inconsiderable part of the pleasantness of living; but they are not a necessity, and they lose all their charm when they involve running in debt, or dishonesty, or even the sacrifice of small daily comforts for a household. It is a poor sort of ambition that leads us to rob the Peter

of comfort to pay the Paul of show,—to live beyond our means at the cost of perpetual anxiety of mind, or of depriving ourselves of the pleasure of helping others. So to calculate our expenses and our pleasures as to bring them well within our income and leave an easy margin, is a receipt for cheerfulness and ease of mind that cannot be over-estimated.

Nothing more surely indicates the *parvenu* than boastfulness. The man who brings in the name of some fine acquaintance at every turn of the conversation is almost certain to be one whose acquaintance with any one who is fine is of yesterday. Really well-placed people do not need to advertise their connections in this manner.

Ostentation in dress is another mark of newness. The woman born to the purple knows when to wear her royal robes. You do not see her in silk at a picnic, or appearing in jewels and laces at breakfast.

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A simplicity which is almost exaggerated prevails, just now, in the best society. An American lady whom I met last summer in London said to me, in a tone of surprise, "Why, all the ladies I see out here have on chintz or gingham;" and it was true that you seldom saw a really fashionable woman in anything but the most simple and inexpensive toilet until dinner. Where an American girl would wear silk or velvet, an English girl would wear gingham or serge.

If it is essentially vulgar to push,—to run after great people, or to affect a style of living beyond one's means,—it is not only vulgar but contemptible to change one's friends with one's bettering fortunes. I know one highly successful man, whom the great world holds in distinguished honor, of whom it is said, among those who know him best, that his life has been like climbing a ladder, of which he successively kicked

away each round as soon as he ceased to need it to step upon. Only noble minds are capable of gratitude, which is by no means a cheap virtue, since it is natural to the baser order of character to resent in another the very superiority which has enabled that other to help us. The spirit which is called time-serving is the spirit of a snob. The truly well-bred person will take infinitely more pains to put a retiring and shy acquaintance at his ease than to pay court to a rich one. Undue social ambition, moreover, infallibly defeats itself, since there is that element of perversity in human nature which leads most of the world far more readily to accord us what we have no appearance of too eagerly desiring.



COURTESY AT HOME.







## COURTESY AT HOME.

**G**OOD-BREEDING, like charity, should begin at home. The days are past when children used to rise the moment their parents entered the room where they were, and stand until they had received permission to sit; but the mistake is now usually made in the other direction, — of allowing to small boys and girls too much license to disturb the peace of the household. I think the best way to train children in courtesy would be to observe toward them a scrupulous politeness. I would go so far as to say that we should make it as much a point to listen to children without interrupting them, and to answer them sincerely and respectfully,

as if they were grown up. And indeed many of their wise, quaint sayings are far better worth listening to than the stereotyped commonplaces of most morning callers. Of course to allow uninterrupted chatter would be to surrender the repose of the household; but it is very easy, if children are themselves scrupulously respected, to teach them in turn scrupulously to respect the convenience of others, and to know when to talk and when to be silent.

If a child is brought up in the constant exercise of courtesy toward brothers and sisters and playmates, as well as toward parents and uncles and aunts, it will have little left to learn as it grows older. I know a bright and bewitching little girl who was well instructed in table etiquette, but who forgot her lessons sometimes, as even older people do now and then. The arrangement was made with her that for every solecism she was to pay a fine of five

cents, while for every similar carelessness which she could discover in her elders she was to exact a fine of ten cents, their experience of life being longer than hers. You may be sure that Mistress Bright 'Eyes watched the proceedings of that table very carefully. No slightest disregard of the most conventional etiquette escaped her quick vision, and she was an inflexible creditor and a faithful debtor. It was the prettiest sight to see her, when conscious of some failure on her own part, go unhesitatingly to her money-box and pay cheerfully her little tribute to the outraged proprieties.

I have often thought that one very fertile cause of unhappy marriages was the lack of courtesy between husbands and wives. It is quite too much the custom to regard conventional etiquette as absurd between two people so closely allied. But I like to see the man who takes his hat off as scru-

pulously on parting with his wife in the street as if she were an acquaintance of yesterday, who would no more answer her brusquely than he would reply carelessly to his hostess at a reception. I will make a confession. We are very fond of fine manners, we women, and of little graceful attentions, and I am sadly afraid that the worthiest of his sex, who had a careless and indifferent way of treating us, would stand small chance of holding our hearts beside some easy-going sinner, far less valuable as a citizen, who said tender and pretty things to us and never forgot when it was the anniversary of his wedding-day. However "mildly but firmly," as Bret Harte says, Mr. Rahejester may throw his candlestick at our heads, we should like him better if he politely lighted our candle and held the door open for us.

I believe it is so with men also, and that the embodiment in one grand creature of

all the virtues of her sex would stand less chance of a life-long honeymoon than some gentle, persuasive she, who cared for ribbons and laces, and was just as assiduous to please after years of matrimony as in the days when her young lover came to woo. It is not too great a sacrifice for love's sake, surely, to listen like a lady when one's husband speaks, even if the stories he tells have been heard before, and like wine that has been corked, have a little lost their flavor.

Why, moreover, should we grudge our words of praise to the one whom in our hearts we best love? I will imitate the frankness of Jean Jacques Rousseau, in my confession of feminine frailties, and it is one of them to love dearly to be praised for what we do well; perhaps we even love to be praised for what we do ill; but that would be too much to expect of the most accomplished of domestic courtiers. I do

not think that this love of approval is unwholesome. It seems to me it is one of the motive powers by which society is governed, and I do not believe that men possess it to one shade less a degree than we do ourselves. Indeed, I am not advocating insincerity. Flattery is a poisonous air in which no good growth can flourish ; but while we are lavish in thanks and compliments to others, why should we withhold them from those who are nearest and dearest to us?

The best brought up family of children I ever knew were educated on the principle of always commending them when it was possible to do so, and letting silence be the reproof of any wrong-doing which was not really serious. I have heard the children of this household, when their mother had failed to say any word of commendation after some social occasion, ask as anxiously as possible, "What was it, mamma? I know

something was wrong. Did n't we treat the other children well, or were we too noisy?" In that house reproof was never bestowed unsought; only commendation, of whatever it was possible to commend, was gratuitous.

I think this system would be as good for those grown-up children, the husbands and wives, as for those still in the nursery. I once asked the late Hepworth Dixon, with whom I happened to be talking on this subject, what he thought was the reason why some women held their husband's hearts securely and forever, while others were but the brief tenants of a few months or years. "What," I asked, "is the quality in a woman which her husband loves longest?" "That she should be a pillow," answered Mr. Dixon; and then meeting the inquiry in my eyes, he went on, "Yes, that is what a man needs in his wife, — something to rest his heart on. He has excitement and opposition enough in the world. He



wants to feel that there is one place where he is sure of sympathy, a place that will give him ease as a pillow gives it to a tired head. Do you think a man will be tempted to turn from the woman whose eyes are his approving mirror, — who heals where others wound?"

And surely he was right. We are grateful for even a too flattering faith in us, and if there is any good in us at all we try to deserve this faith. But tenderness in the conjugal heart is much more common than grace in the conjugal manner. Since, however, next to that supreme good of being satisfied in one's own conscience is that second great good of being satisfied in one's own home, surely no details of manner that tend to such a result are too slight to be observed. I believe in making as pretty a toilet to greet the returning husband as one put on to await the expected sweetheart; and when the husband comes,

he makes a mistake very fatal to his own interests if he fail to notice what he would have praised in other days. It is a trite saying that life is made up of trifles; but surely the sum of all these domestic trifles amounts to the difference between happiness and unhappiness.

I believe in the strictest respect for the integrity of another person's correspondence. It is a pleasure to open one's own letters, however willing one may be to share their contents afterward, and a well-bred person finds it hard to pardon the rudeness that hands her a letter with the seal broken. Constant care not to interfere with the personal rights of another is a very important part of home courtesy. In the smallest things, such even as not taking a chair which some one else is in the habit of using and would be likely to miss, a really thoughtful and considerate person is revealed.

This sedulous consideration for each other's rights is quite as important between brothers and sisters while they remain under one roof as between husbands and wives; more important even, in one sense, since the rights of brothers and sisters are yet more individual. The perpetual borrowing of one another's ornaments and small articles of wearing apparel which goes on in some families seems to me anything but ladylike, to say nothing of the fact that it usually puts the careful and provident members of the household quite at the mercy of the careless and wasteful. I would discourage borrowing from childhood.

Home is the place to cultivate gentleness of tone and manner. The shrill tones of some American girls make one shudder, but they date back to noisy playrooms and undisciplined nurseries. Consideration for servants is another lesson which cannot be too carefully enforced on the children of

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a household, since it is something in which so many grown-up people are wanting.

In countries where caste is more clearly defined than with us, where servants as a class are more contented and less ambitious, the problems of domesticity are no doubt less difficult of solution. Yet even here one sees plenty of households where the *juste milieu* is happily preserved; where the master and mistress are never familiar, with that cheap familiarity that breeds contempt, nor yet are they disregardful of that common humanity which entitles a servant to kindness and sympathy. The feelings of a servant should be respected by a well-bred person more carefully, if such a thing were possible, than those of an equal, inasmuch as they are more at our mercy. We should encourage them to depend upon our friendliness, and come to us as to a sort of human providence in any serious illness or trouble.

If no man is a hero to his valet, it is the fault of the valet, and because he does not know a hero when he sees him. And inasmuch as the valet is presumably incapable of understanding the hero, it becomes the hero to maintain a kind and gentle reserve which no audacity would dare to invade.

The perfect home, — and it seems to me that I know some homes which are as perfect as anything can be in an imperfect world, — the perfect home is one where no least detail of courtesy is omitted between husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants; but where this good-breeding is not the slavish obedience to a set of fixed rules, but of honest respect for individual rights, and heartfelt desire on the part of each one to be as agreeable and as beloved as is possible.

FRIENDLY VISITING.





### FRIENDLY VISITING.

**I**F courtesy begins at home, so also does hospitality; and perhaps there is no more absolute test of the good-breeding of a man or woman than the power to be agreeable in the capacity of entertainer. To leave a sufficient amount of freedom to one's visitors and at the same time not to neglect them is, in itself, no unimportant problem. To begin with, the terms of an invitation should be so clear that a guest will not fall into the mortifying error of staying longer than is convenient to the host, and perhaps discovering it, in some unfortunate moment, with a never-to-be-forgotten shock.



“Will you come to us for a week?” or, “Can you give us the pleasure of your company from Saturday till Monday?” is a much more satisfactory form of invitation than “Will you come to us for a little visit?” since two people may have widely differing ideas as to what a little visit might mean. An invitation once given and accepted, only a very important reason can excuse any failure in the fulfilment of the engagement. Your host has very likely put aside other arrangements for that week, and has made others, still, to follow it, and you have no right to take it for granted that any other time than he has named would be equally convenient.

A visitor should carefully avoid making herself a burden to her hostess. No doubt we all know what it is to have guests who hang so constantly and so heavily on our hands that we breathe a sigh of relief when bedtime comes. The most undesir-

able inmate in the world is the one who has nothing to do, and for whom you feel bound to provide some continual entertainment. Let the guest who desires not to wear out her welcome make it very evident that she has resources of her own, and can take care of herself at any time, while yet she is quite ready to fall into the plans of the family. She will interest herself cordially in the occupations of her friends, in the relatives and visitors of the household; she will be careful not to disturb the domestic routine, to be punctual at meals, and observant of all the customs of the house, and quick to recognize gratefully the efforts that are made to give her pleasure.

The most perfect hospitality is always without fussiness. It is intolerable to apologize, except under some very peculiar circumstances, such, for instance, as the sudden and unforeseen departure of a cook.

You know the resources of your establishment before inviting your guest. If they are not sufficient for comfort, you will withhold the invitation; but, once that your friend has come, spare her the disagreeableness of feeling that she is upsetting your arrangements and putting you out. Let her share, as far as possible, your ordinary domestic life and be a party to your interests.

Whatever she may have done with herself during the day, she will pass the evening in the drawing-room, and it would be but a poor compliment to her hosts were she to be less well-dressed or less entertaining when they were alone than when they had invited friends to meet her. In the case of visits between the most intimate friends, it is still well to remember that there may be such a thing as giving your hostess too much of your company; that notwithstanding your presence in the

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house she has still her own life to live, her own letters to write, her other friends to receive; and that to most persons a little solitude during the day is an indispensable condition of happiness. To enter the private room of one's most intimate friend without knocking should be as carefully avoided as if she were a mere acquaintance.

Nor should one presume upon intimacy to ask personal questions. If there is anything which your friend is prepared to confide to you, she will not await your inquiries; and to force a confidence is as burglarious as to rob a bank. It is necessary, only, that you should be what the Italians call *simpatica*, — the very most charming of all qualities in a friend. There are people in whose very presence is some gracious magnetism that soothes our cares, cheers our sadness, and invites our confidence. A great art critic has said there can be three portraits of John. There

can be John as his neighbors see him, John as he sees himself, and John as he is. The person who is truly *simpatica* is very likely to see John as he is, and to know him even better than he knows himself. She can help him to find out his own motives; to be, what Fénelon says it is so hard to be, as just to one's self as to another; and so she can comfort him, even under the pangs of self-reproach or despair.

To be a friend of this sort, something deeper than good manners is needful; but to be such a friend without good manners is impossible. It requires that sympathy should be unobtrusive, — that we should show ourselves not curious to know but ready to listen. Then it requires — and this is most imperative — not only scrupulous loyalty, but the most sensitive delicacy. Suppose that in some moment of expansion and has confided to you a secret,

some wound to her heart or her pride, some canker-worm that is gnawing secretly at her roses; give, at the time, all possible tenderness, and all the healing of the uttermost sympathy, but take good care to remember that

“Colors seen by candlelight  
Do not look the same by day.”

To-morrow she may feel that she has said too much, she may wince a little as she meets your eyes, she may shrink from your pity as from a blow. It is then the part of good-breeding, which is only another name for thoughtful kindness, to seem to have forgotten all that she had said. Let her be the first to recall it to you. If she never alludes to it again, be as silent concerning the matter to herself as honor would bind you to be to every one else.

The question of social honor is one that scarcely ought to need discussion. It would seem as if no one of any self-respect could

violate its canons; yet there exist persons who do not scruple to mention what they hear said in a friend's house, unless an absolute promise to the contrary has been exacted. It should surely be unnecessary to say "This is in confidence;" that goes without saying, from the mere fact that you are at the time a member of the family.

Another matter worth mentioning is the respect a visitor should observe for the opinions of her hosts. She may think their prejudices old-fashioned or narrow, but if she is a lady she will avoid shocking them. If she differ ever so widely in politics or in religion, those fertile subjects of discussion, she will do well to keep her opinions to herself for the time, unless her intimacy is so close and her knowledge of her friends so thorough that she can be quite sure differences of opinion will not result in bitterness.

A young lady in visiting her friend who is one of a household of brothers and sisters, should be careful not to engross that friend to the exclusion of the rest of the family. I knew a visit to be paid by one young lady to a friend who had a sister almost of her own age, and from whom she had scarcely ever in her life been separated. The visitor was a girl absorbed in literary pursuits, and her own especial friend sympathized very ardently in these tastes, while the other sister was something of an artist and altogether a girl of society, full of interest in what was going on around her. Soon she found her sister, who had hitherto been her constant companion, quite withdrawn from her by the visitor. A not unnatural jealousy possessed her. She felt herself left out in the cold. She grew hurt and estranged, and I doubt if those sisters will ever be quite the same to each other again. Yet how easy it would have been



for the two friends to have had their hours of romance and of reading together, and to have found plenty of other hours for the general life of the family. A really thoughtful kindness of heart would have prevented such a mistake; but all kindness of heart is not thoughtful, and it is the office of thorough good-breeding to prevent the errors that spring from thoughtlessness.

The Catholics say that the essence of religion is to be "recollected," and to keep us recollected in private life is the office of good-breeding. The carefully trained lady, with whom consideration is not alone an instinct but an acquirement, will take even more care to remember her social obligations to those members of a household in whom she is not specially interested than to the one who for love's sake could most easily forgive her.

THE SMALL COIN OF THE SOCIAL  
EXCHANGE.





## THE SMALL COIN OF THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE.

A LETTER has come to me in which I am especially interested, since it opens a fruitful field for thought and discussion. It expresses the desire of a person, well educated from a scholastic and scientific point of view, to know by what course of training he can arrive at ease and grace of expression, at the little *nuances* of language which give polish to conversation,—the evening dress of thought, let us say, which adorns it for polite society.

What books shall he read? What models shall he study?

Also he would fain write “beautiful letters.” But that art comes not forth by

prayer and fasting, and is not the fruit of study. To write a correct letter is in the power of any reasonably well-educated person; but the art to write a letter such as the famous letter-writers of the world have bequeathed to us is as rare a gift of Nature as the ability to write an absorbing tale or a noble poem.

My unknown correspondent is thirty; he has been a solitary student, it seems, rather than a loungee in ladies' drawing-rooms, and now, perhaps, he has inherited a fortune, or, better yet, made one, and he fain would disport himself somewhat in the world of fashion. "Will books help me?" he asks, "and what books shall I read?"

Will my counsel be considered frivolous, I wonder? To begin with, I should advise him to read good novels. Nothing save actual social experience can completely give one the habit and tone of good society; but unquestionably the books that

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would most aid him in this direction are the works of our best novelists. I am supposing that he has already a tolerable acquaintance with the history of nations and the literature which is classic. He knows his mythology, and will not confound Hercules with Apollo, as did an unhappy youth whom I once met in a gallery of sculpture. With the solid background of a good school education he can gain more ideas that will help him socially from modern novels than from any other books whatever. What grave historian has reproduced the social manners and customs of his time half so faithfully as Miss Austin presents to us the domestic and social life of the middle class of the England which she knew? A course of Anthony Trollope is as good as a London season; and surely Howells and James and their *confrères* have lifted the *portières* of our own drawing-rooms and shown us very clearly what is going on inside.

The next best thing to being deeply learned is to be what Gail Hamilton calls "well-smattered;" and one gets a smattering of almost everything from the modern novel. Its heroines live up to their blue china more faithfully than the people we meet in actual life, and they are very good acquaintances for the novitiate of a social aspirant. To be at ease in any circle, it is necessary to understand its language, its cant phrases, the dialect in which it discusses art and literature and music, its well-bred slang,—for there *is* a well-bred slang, and one may surely venture to defend its limited usefulness, since Emerson has set the example.

If I were a man of thirty, with a tolerable education, but without the self-possession and *aplomb* given by familiarity with society, I would begin with good modern novels. Dickens and Thackeray have created whole galleries of characters so inti-

mate to the acquaintance of everybody that not to be familiar with them would be as awkward as not to know who discovered America. My unknown correspondent, no doubt, already knows them well; but there are scores of clever society novelists writing to-day, any of whose books it would be worth his while to read.

Also I would read, if I were he, the best short poems of the best modern poets. I would make myself familiar with the biographies of literary men and women which are just now a sort of fashion of literature, and with the works in which art and artists are briefly and comprehensively treated. Meantime I would use every opportunity that offered itself for going into really good society. There is something to be acquired by conversation with well-bred people which can be obtained in no other way. Thank Heaven there are women left still of whom the stately old compliment might be re-



peated,—“To know her is a liberal education.” As Emerson says in his essay upon “Manners,” “Are there not women who inspire us with courtesy; who unloose our tongues, and we speak; who anoint our eyes, and we see? We say things we never thought to have said. For once, our walls of habitual reserve vanished and left us at large; we were children playing with children in a wide field of flowers. Steep us, we cried, in these influences for days, for weeks, and we shall be sunny poets and write out in many-colored words the romance that you are.”

Nor does the loftiness of this praise overtop the social value of the right kind of woman. If a woman who is at once wise and witty, who is herself at home in society and familiar with its shibboleths, will be good enough to let you be her friend, then, indeed, your social training is  
your success a foregone conclusion.

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She will be the brightest and best of guides through the mazes of social life, and he who is thus piloted need fear no hidden rocks. But a friend of this kind is harder to find than four-leaved clover; and I must confess she is more likely to be found by the man who does not need her than by him who does. Women hate to be bored, and he who would please must, first of all, be pleasing. He must have a certain amount of subtlety of perception.

There are women who are themselves not fluent, and who love to be talked to, to be spared the trouble of "making conversation." With these women it is the ready talker who finds favor. But there is a class of women, quite as large, who love to talk, and to them it is the good listener who is welcome. Now I am not going to propose social martyrdom. I shall not advise the man who burns to utter his thronging thoughts, to transform himself into the

patient listener. No; but let him choose his audience with discretion. Madame Récamier liked to be talked to, and was so sympathetic a listener that I have always believed that was the chiefest of her charms; but he would have been a bold man who would have interfered with the flow of Madame de Staël's eloquence, and tried to drown her persistent treble with his bass. If, then, you love to talk, pass by the Madame de Staëls with a bow, and find a seat beside the Récamiers.

I remember meeting once at a party one of the ablest and most brilliant of our American literary women. In her own house I had heard her talk as if she were inspired, and yet on this night of which I speak I beheld her with amazement sitting quite by herself in the corner of a sofa. I went over and sat down by her.

"You are defrauding people," I said;  
"is selfish of you not to talk."

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"No," she answered, "I have nothing for them that they want. I have some bank bills, but no small change."

And, after all, it is small change rather than bank bills that society requires. I am sure that he whose letter was my text has bank bills enough; I have only been suggesting to him where to find the small coin.





CAPRICES OF FASHION.





## CAPRICES OF FASHION.

A WRITER in a London review complains vigorously of the present fashions for men. He says they force his neck into the all-round collar, his knees into uncomfortable trousers, and his feet into pointed boots. "Then," continues this writer, "there is another misery, too, which is darkly shadowed forth in certain rigid—unnaturally rigid—lines about the waist, and in a faint sound of creaking. Can it be that there are men who voluntarily undergo the misery of the tightly-laced corset?"

I should have read this dire suggestion with only a passing smile, or rejected it as a malicious libel on the manly Englishman,



had not one of the most manly of men confided to me, some time ago, his regret that the fashion of corsets was being revived among the *jeunesse dorée*. My informant was a client of the great Poole, and a man of fashion; and though he had not himself condescended to corsets, he assured me that many men whom he knew were wearing them, and to that fact was owing the unusual trimness of their waists. It is the present idea of beauty in men's evening dress to have clothes that fit the figure almost like the skin; and it is hinted that the extremists strive to make that figure as much like a fashion-plate as possible by lacing. Surely there is too much good sense in the world for such a folly to become at all general, even among men of fashion; but it seems like a kind of protest against the somewhat overdone glorification of muscle and brawn; and, after all, it is only a revival. The men in Lawrence's books


—or, to speak of healthier literature, in Charles Kingsley's—were no manlier than that noble Englishman, Lord Ellenborough, and Lord Ellenborough wore well-fitting corsets and a beautiful curling wig, and even rouged his manly cheeks.

Talking of protests, I fancy that æstheticism, in its exaggerated form, is a protest against loudness and fastness. A few years ago the Girl of the Period was unmistakably fast. She stormed society. She talked a horsey kind of slang. An odor of surreptitious cigarettes hung about her. Mrs. Lynn Linton satirized her very cleverly in the "Saturday Review." "Punch" immortalized her in a laugh. Novelists adorned their tales with her, and pointed their morals at her. At last she grew to feel herself "bad form," and changed her fashions and her manners. She became a disciple of "Beauty in Life," and went forth to conquer in limp robes and with a lily in her hand.

At first she had the charm of novelty as well as of grace. To come upon her in her limp raiment and ruffled hair, rapt, as it seemed, in some tender trance of dreaming, was like meeting a rare, fair creature from another and more stately and gracious world. Her garments smelled of lavender, — no suspicions of secret nicotine defiled them. Her talk — when she talked at all — was of Beauty and Worship, and themes which she called High and Precious. You saw her in her own drawing-room, among her blue china, in a stained-glass attitude, and you might have fallen in love with her, but that she seemed singularly ill-adapted to all the every-day uses of life, — as much made just to be looked at as ever was a lady in a picture. She was out of place at balls. Even the opera seemed too worldly a setting for her. She went to hear Wagner's music and see Burne Jones's pictures, and she read Rossetti's poems,

without, I fear, understanding too much of them; and she called the music and the pictures and the poems all "precious," and said that their creators were "high souls," smitten like herself with a "Divine Despair."

Now there have grown to be too many of *her*. When the Fast Young Lady became common, she became vulgar and odious. The Æsthetic Young Lady, in becoming common has become amusing, and the one is as fatal as the other. Limp gowns and faint lilies are doomed to go out of fashion. The caprices of the æsthete have been numerous. They have not been contented to be "Early English,"—they have even aspired to be Greek. A season or two ago a charming and beautiful poetess appeared in London society in a quaint and graceful robe—a sort of peplum, borrowed from the ladies of ancient Greece—a white, softly-falling garment, heavy with gold embroidery,



which Grecian Helen might have coveted. It was a shining success. Then an inspiration came to our poetess. She would give a party which, as far as the toilets of the women were concerned, should be all Greek. Two sole exceptions were permitted. One was in favor of a venerable lady who was nearly eighty years of age, and to whose withered arms the cold-blooded revelation of the peplum seemed unsuited, while she was already Greek, by virtue of a translation; and the other was a well-known literary woman, whose weight is some two hundred and seventy-five pounds, and who could hardly be expected to appear in flowing robes. The men were the trouble. The fair poetess knew her countrymen too well to fancy that she could persuade them to don the attire of Greece. She must take them in claw-hammer coats, or not at all. So she submitted to the inevitable, and resolved to treat us to the

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mixed spectacle of nymphs with nineteenth-century faces, clad as Aspasia was clad when she charmed Pericles, and attended by solemn Englishmen clothed decorously by the tailors of to-day.

The cards of invitation definitely stated the costumes required, and a grand commotion was produced among the fair recipients. Self-examination became searching. Will my arms do? was the question which shook Society. One lady who has found — so her admirers aver — “the lost arms of the Venus of Milo,” ordered her peplum and sandals at once. Others “hesitated,” and then were “lost,” in the Greek garments. Two gentle sisters, fairest of the fair, and great friends of the hostess, looked sorrowfully at themselves and each other, and sent regrets — their arms were too thin.

The night came, and it was a goodly sight to see spacious rooms, all flowers and

draperies and divans and soft cushions, full of women who looked as if they might have stepped out of a Greek chorus, while among them moved erect, energetic, nineteenth-century men, in well-fitting evening dress, suggestive of Poole and Nicol.

The caprices of Fashion are much like the figures thrown by a magic lantern. Scarcely do you get used to them when they retire. The *Æsthetic* Young Lady must already make way for her successor. Who will score the next social success, I wonder? Will it be, perchance, fair creatures who wear French toilets and pride themselves on their resemblance to the distinguished lay figures in the perilous parlors of Worth? They would, at least, be fit companions for the men who have already secretly betaken themselves to corsets.

THE DELUSION OF EGOTISM.







## THE DELUSION OF EGOTISM.

I CAUGHT the Hammersmith train in good time, and was calmly congratulating myself thereon, when a lady appeared in front of the door of my carriage, which the guard was just about to close. She was a smiling yet anxious-looking lady, of uncertain age. She accosted the guard in a voice a little worn but persuasive, —

“*Is this the South Kensington train?*”

“No, ma’am; ‘Ammersmith.”

“Ah! then I won’t take it. I will wait,” she said; and she smiled pleasantly on him, and then seemed a little surprised, perhaps gently grieved, that he did not continue the talk.

As we moved off I fell to thinking about Faith, and what a happy thing it was, and how large a share it had in conversation. This lady had been sweetly sure of the sympathy of the guard. She evidently thought her intentions and her disappointments must be of interest to this fellow-mortal; and she deceived herself no more than we all do, when we come to think of it. It is this gentle self-deception on which most of our conversations are based. Mothers tell us long stories of the teeth and talents of their hopeful offspring, with a touching confidence in our interest which defends them even from our smiles. There is so much unselfish love in the heart of a mother that she really pays our human nature a tribute when she believes us quite ready to share it.

It is somewhat less pardonable when we inflict on our acquaintances the tragic histories of our own past maladies and mis-

adventures. We enjoy the hour we pass in describing the six weeks of typhoid fever which burned us when we were sixteen. The droll vagaries of our fevered brain seem intensely funny to us as we recall them, and it never occurs to us to ask ourselves whether we should be equally interested in our companion's measles, did he set to and describe them. We tell him a long tale about our ancestors; or we dwell on the faults and follies of our maid who would n't wear a cap, or the other one who burned the toast, or Jane, who always told a lie when she was frightened; and we sun ourselves in the smile of politeness which gilds his countenance, and are sure that we have been entertaining him to the last degree.

If we stopped to think, we might indeed question whether he were any more eager to hear about our servants and sicknesses and sorrows than we, in turn, are eager to

hear about his; but after all this faith has a good side. We prove by it our esteem for him with whom we talk, our confidence in his unselfishness and good-nature. Of course we do not intend to bore him. When we pour into his patient ear all our pleasant little personalities, we are paying him a subtle compliment. We show, practically, how large of heart we think him, how sweet of soul, how self-forgetful, how capable of loving his neighbor as himself! We do not wilfully draw checks upon a bank where we have made no deposit; when, therefore, we make drafts upon the interest of our companions, it must be that we feel reasonably sure these drafts will be honored, and our assurance has its foundation in our belief in their large and fine sympathy.

When I was a little child, a good old man who had had three shocks of paralysis often to visit at my father's. He

was fond of telling stories, and he used to tell each story precisely three times, — once apiece, as I used to think, for each of these mysterious “shocks” of which I had been told. But neither the stories nor their repetition impressed me so much as the fact that my mother used to laugh heartily at them each time. One day I asked her how this was possible.

“Oh,” she said, “I laugh the first time because the story is funny. I’m afraid I do laugh the second time because I know that he wants me to; but the third laugh is quite genuine, again, for I begin to think how droll it is that he should always tell things just three times!”

So, after all, the good old man’s faith in the gentle woman who laughed with him, but never at him, was not misplaced.

When we ride our hobbies, faith always makes smooth the track for their flying feet. These winged coursers bear us to regions

in which we ourselves delight, — what more natural than to conclude that others will also enjoy these pleasant pastures? So we talk of pictures to a man with no eye for color; of Egyptian antiquities to a pretty girl; of music to some one who does not know “Obadiah” from a Beethoven *sonata*; and we are too happy to notice the suppressed yawn, or the smile, pathetic in its patience, which responds. But there is one respect in which *noblesse* should oblige. If we are to go through life making these drafts upon the sympathy of our neighbors, we ought at least to be quite ready to be drawn upon in return.

I have heard two girls telling each other about their sweethearts. The honest truth was that neither cared in the least for the other’s love-story; she listened to it only for the subsequent pleasure of dwelling upon her own. Said one, —

“John cannot bear me to flirt ever so

little, you know. I think he would rather I did n't look at any one else."

"Ah," said the other, "Tom is n't like that at all. He likes me to be admired. He wants me to tell him when the men make geese of themselves, and then we laugh at them together."

"Ah, yes; but John thinks they would n't make geese of themselves, don't you know, if I did n't do something; and he's so afraid I'll care a bit about somebody else. Of course it's absurd of him; but then, after all, it's rather nice, you know."

"Ah, yes; but then it's so nice, too, to be trusted; and Tom says I'm not like other girls, and he always knows where my heart is."

And so the gentle creatures go on for an hour or two; till, finally, the ludicrous aspect of it dawns on the brighter of the two, and she cries out, "Strophe and anti-strophe," shaking her pretty head, and goes



away to read over her last love-letter in solitude.

I have seen mothers listen patiently for hours to each other's panegyrics on hopeful sons and blooming daughters; not at all for the pleasure of hearing, but simply for that of talking when their turn came. They would submit to long narrations about Dick and Dora, for the sake of being allowed to speak afterward of Charley and Caroline. I sometimes think we are all, at heart, of something the same kidney with the old man who prayed, —

“God bless me and my wife,  
My son John and his wife, —  
Us four, and no more.”

We do not quite so frankly acknowledge this centralization of interest in the first person, even to ourselves; but there it is, and secret consciousness of our own weakened the occult foundation of the give to others. The faith

which is the basis of conversation has, after all, its firm root in the soil of egotism. It is not alone that we trust in the kindness of our fellows, it is yet more that we are aware of the keenness of each man's desire to speak in his turn. We can reasonably count on his willingness to hear us patiently, since he thereby makes good his own claim on our responsive patience and attention.

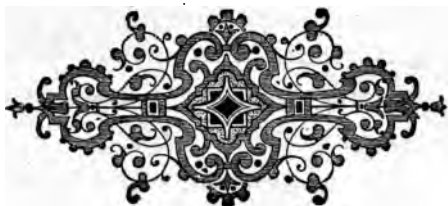
People talk of the sympathy of Nature, but for my part, it is something which I have never experienced. I think that Nature is but a mocker. She flaunts her sunshine in the face of our darkest miseries. She damps our gayest moments with her rains, or howls at us, when we would be merry, with her shrieking, melancholy, prophetic winds. She weeps at our weddings and smiles at our funerals. She listens with no kindly interest to our woes, she who has no story to tell in return. Faith in her

would be misplaced, for, being without pain, she is also without compassion. The human creature, on the other hand, who has himself been wounded, cannot afford to jest at scars; and the placid faith which underlies so much of our discourse is by no means so unreasoning as at the first blush it might seem.



**WATERING-PLACE SOCIETY.**





## WATERING-PLACE SOCIETY.

**I**F there is one current expression more intrinsically vulgar than another, it is to talk of "making a show," when not to make a show, not to be conspicuous, not to draw special attention to ourselves, is the very essence of good-breeding. Dr. Johnson found that woman well dressed whose clothes he could not remember. How the old bear would have growled over some of the watering-place toilets of to-day! Not that one would object to a certain bright and festal aspect, which belongs to the place and the time as roses belong to the summer; but to strive to outshine one's neighbors, or to dress for a watering-place

hotel as if it were the Queen's drawing-room, is the height of vulgarity.

As the newsboy said, "You pays your money, and you takes your choice." You can be lonely and happy and free from care at some quiet haunt in the country or at the seaside; or you can pack your Saratoga trunks and go on, through the heats of July and August, with all the social excitements and fatigues of the winter. If you go to the quiet place, the formalities of etiquette may be left behind; but mother Nature, with her self-possession and reserve, will teach you good-breeding. Nature brings up her maiden well.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her; for her the willow bend;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place,

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Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face."

But if to this high breeding of mother Nature—these charms which Wordsworth sings—you prefer the frivolities of society and the Saratoga trunks, then will I whisper in your sea-shell ears a caution,—“All is not gold that glitters.”

Watering-places have more than once proved full of danger to the unsuspecting. The greatest care is necessary to maintain at the same time the cordiality of demeanor that belongs to the place and the manner of life there, and yet to preserve intact the delicacy of personal reserve, and to keep undesirable acquaintances at a dignified distance.

By undesirable acquaintances, believe me, I do not mean those whose Saratoga trunks are not full, and whose only carriage is the watering-place omnibus. I have seen gov-



ernesses just hovering on the outskirts of the fashionable society into which they had been brought for other people's convenience—to play accompaniments for 'wilful rosebuds or watch over wayward children—who seemed to me far better worth knowing and more interesting than were their employers. Neither are quiet little ladies or shy men who have gone to look on at the gay pageant among the dangerous and detrimental. But a watering-place is the natural haunt of the human shark, seeking whom he may devour. Counts who are no counts go there, peers whose pedigree is a fiction, women whose reputations are as much of the past as are their complexions, and who are making a last struggle for social life. To guard against these, to distinguish paste from diamonds, false from true, requires some social experience; and a young girl cannot be too careful whose acquaintance she makes, nor

can her natural guardians watch over her too zealously.

On the other hand, it is hardly generous to withhold one's self from the common life of a watering-place. If you go there at all, it should be to contribute your quota to the general fund of entertainment. It is churlish to refuse to sing if you have a nightingale in your throat, or to decline to dance, or to convey any impression of holding yourself apart from those around you. And even in the very haunts of fashion and frivolity there is room for all sorts of feminine sweetness.

I have known one woman of pure mind and kindly heart and fine breeding change the whole atmosphere of a summer hotel into something higher and finer by her very presence. She it was who organized private theatricals, who suggested impromptu dances and *tableaux*, who checked gossip by the charity of her judgments,

and raised the tone of conversation by herself talking of worthy themes. And in the midst of all this busy promoting of other people's happiness, she found hours of every day in which to live her own life, to read her favorite books, and to write her letters. If any one was ill, from her came kind inquiries and pleasant little attentions. She could have dazzled by the brilliancy of her conversation; but she chose, instead, to bring out the best powers of others. If popularity had been her object she certainly attained it, for she was the one person whom all united to praise; but not for that had she striven. The grace and charm which pervaded her life struck their roots deeper than any desire to please. They came from a wish to give pleasure, which is quite another thing.

At a watering-place, a lady who is to the manner born will avoid dressing conspicuously. Low-necked dresses, or necks

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and arms veiled only by the thinnest material, are not in good taste where one is surrounded by strangers. It has been said that no nation so delights to live in public as the American; but if this is true, there may yet exist, even while living *en evidence*, a certain avoidance of personal display. To dress too youthfully is a bad thing anywhere, but it is especially unwise thus to provoke the satirical comments of the crowd at a summer resort. That French writer understood his world who, in giving a chapter of advice to women who wish to charm, exhorted them to let their faces be younger than their toilets. The woman who would be charming must study her own defects as carefully as her advantages, since if she ignores them other people are only too sure to remember.

The etiquette of watering-places is not ceremonious. Introductions are more easily obtained than elsewhere, and one makes

acquaintances on piazzas and in dining-rooms without even the ceremony of a presentation; but this free-and-easy acquaintanceship should have its limits. Married ladies, fortified by the dignity of their position, can form acquaintances with a freedom that should never be permitted to the rosebuds. A young girl's reserve is one of her deepest charms. She should have something of the sensitive plant about her by nature, and unless she has been brought up in a bad school, there is no danger of her forming intimacies too easily.

The *juste milieu* is especially the law of the watering-place; and she who would go through this social ordeal with credit should be as careful to maintain her own essential dignity as she is not to hurt other people's self-love, and so cast a gloom on the general festivity by any haughty withdrawal of herself from the stir and life going on about her.

THE GOSPEL OF GOOD GOWNS.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee who have been appointed to investigate the matter.

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## THE GOSPEL OF GOOD GOWNS.

**D**RESS as a fine art is no unworthy study, and to beautify and adorn our women would be an education of the public taste. Women are more common than pictures, and ought, therefore, to be picturesque enough to delight us. Angels might well weep over the daughter of Eve who makes the wherewithal she shall be clothed the supreme object of her life; but shall there be no condemnation for her who might be fair but will not, and loses thereby so much of her power to give pleasure? To dress too tightly is a sin against health; to dress beyond one's means is dishonest and a crime; to sweep dirty



pavements with delicate gowns is high treason against taste and cleanliness; but are we to jump from these admissions to opposite extremes? Because tight lacing is injurious, are we to lose the recollection of waists? Because extravagance is injustice, are we to set aside ornament altogether? Because flowing robes are out of place upon the sidewalk, are we to wear only short dresses?

"Nature," says the English essayist, Henry Holbeach, "makes great provision for secrecy." Why should we not follow this instinct of our common mother? A delicate reserve inheres in the very being of a natural woman; it surrounds her like an atmosphere. Her dress must express this reserve, or her dress is insincere. Veiling laces, flowing drapery, concealment of outlines,—all these are feminine.

A well-known author once pictured a feminine horror, fifty-two years of age, in

a coarse, flimsy, bright-brown alpaca with ten flimsy, coarse, bright-brown ruffles upon it, and twelve flimsy, coarse, bright-brown bows; with overskirt of bright-green delaine, trimmed with purposeless black folds, and black buttons scattered aimlessly round, like spilled huckleberries; with a gray cloak, whose wide sleeves reveal scrawny arms adorned with tumbled lace and gutta-percha bracelets; with neck set off by cherry-colored necktie and necklace akin to the bracelets, and glass-bead cross, and fur tip-pet, and lace frill, and a velvet string; with gutta-percha earrings, and false curls, and braids whose stuffing of "rats" protrudes; and all this surmounted by a Mansard roof of a hat, made up of black velvet, blue ribbon, pink roses, gray raspberries, imitation lace, green feathers, etc.

It is a picture to move men to sneers and laughter, to move gentler women to pitiful sorrow over the dumb longing after grace

and beauty which knew how to express itself so ill; but it is not a logical argument against the fashions of the present time. As well might one point out such a man as we see sometimes, with trousers in staring plaid, with rainbow necktie, with a big ring on the uncared-for finger, and an anchor pricked in with India ink on the stubby hand, as a walking, swaggering argument against the masculine garniture of our time. There is quite as much resemblance between this attire and the costume of a gentleman as between the pictured toilet of fantastic squalor struggling to be fine, and the dress of a lady, all of whose colors are in harmony and whose every end of ribbon flutters, like the petals of a flower, with a soft and dainty grace. The truth is that dress, like society, is still chaotic in America. If equal suffrage is an education, slow but sure, for voters, so the equal right to follow the fashions may in time

educate the general taste; but neither with voters nor gown-wearers is the process of self-culture picturesque or pleasing. In France your *bonne* must wear her neat and pretty cap; in Italy your peasant serving-woman makes for you a daily picture; but here Bridget's right to her fineries is as undisputed as your own, and if she shock your taste, you have no remedy but the patient influence of that gospel of suitability which every woman should enforce by word and deed.

It is well known that fashion-makers study constantly the old portraits of the court beauties,—the paintings of the old masters,—and gather from them their happiest inspirations. In England there is a little band of Pre-Raphaelites composed of painters and poets and art critics, and men with a genius for appreciation, and their wives. The ladies of this set have adopted a costume of their own. If you

meet in society a woman who looks as if she had stepped out of one of Fra Angelico's or Perugino's pictures, — with long skirts, that sweep but do not rustle, fashioned of material costly as her purse can buy, but severely simple; with jewels in quaint, antique setting; with laces fine as frost-work and yellow as amber,—you are sure to hear some one say to some one else, "That is one of the Pre-Raphaelite ladies."

A half-savage poet from the Western wilds saw in London for the first time one of this group of women. She wore a muslin gown with no stiffness in it (a soft, fine India muslin, crinkled by some curious process, some glorified taking-out of starch) and trimmed with lace that must have been centuries old,—a yellow wonder, of which the art was lost long ago. Her jewels might have been stolen from some petrified belle of Pompeii, or, further back yet, from some mummied daughter of the

Pharaohs. Her long hair floated down her shoulders, framing the clear pallor of her face —

“A face, oh, call it fair, not pale” —

lighted by eyes of wonderful splendor. Our savage had never been introduced to her; but introductions are of to-day. *She* seemed to him of the past, — like a picture or a statue at whose shrine all men might worship. He took for an instant the long, silken hair between his fingers, and then, remembering time and place, he said, “I could not help it. You should not be so beautiful.” The lady, Pre-Raphaelite in her manners as in her attire, and quite capable of understanding the sincere expression of a simply artistic admiration, smiled at him with a blush which warmed, for a moment, the white beauty of her face, and passed on. The savage poet grew afterward to be a close friend to the fair unknown and her husband; but he

says it was the revelation of new possibilities of womanhood when he beheld for the first time the serene simplicity, the Junonian beauty of this woman, looking as the old painters had painted women long ago.

We are sometimes told that our chief errors in costume grow out of dressing with regard to the sentiment we inspire,—that, in short, women dress to please men, and so dress unwisely and unhealthfully. This is only true in part. Men and women do mutually desire to please each other; and to criticise this universal and divinely-implanted instinct would be half impious and wholly idle. But that women do not dress for this end alone must be quite evident to any one who observes the dainty neatness of costume in a girls' school, on whose sacred precincts no masculine foot is permitted to intrude. Women dress, primarily, to please themselves,—to

satisfy their own sense of fitness and of beauty. I know plenty of clever women who cannot even write or read or converse agreeably when ill-dressed; just as some of the most noted authors among Frenchmen have preferred to sit down to write in evening toilet, with a rose in their button-hole, and have made their libraries rival in handsome and graceful appointments a woman's boudoir, because the fine flow of their fancy was checked by ugliness or disorder.

In general, a woman's taste is more exacting than a man's. Small things are of more importance to her, because her life is, naturally as it seems to me, more narrow in its range. The exceptional woman may be and often is successful in a profession that brings her prominently before the world; and the more numerous avenues can be opened for such success the better it will be for womanhood. But



the average woman's kingdom is narrow, and her day a day of small things. Is she of less worth for this? I think not. You do not ask of the oak the rose's perfume, or of the rose the oak's strength; but oak and rose alike honor their Maker, — this by strength and that by sweetness. The desire to please is a natural characteristic of unspoiled womanhood. "If I lived in the woods, I should dress for the trees," said a woman widely known for taste and for culture. Every woman's dress should be, and if she has any ideality will be, an expression of herself. To this woman rose belongs, to this other, violet. A sudden whiff of sweet-brier always brings back to me one woman out of the world of women. I see a low, wide country-house, sloping meadows, shadowing trees, and among them a serene presence looks out from the past, as the Blessed Damozel of Rossetti's poem leaned out from the window of heaven, —

a woman to whom belonged delicate lavenders and pale blues and pearly grays, and always the sweet-brier odor. If she had dressed inharmoniously, would she not long ago have faded from my memory?

The true gospel of dress is that of fitness and of taste. Pictures are painted, and music is written, and flowers are fostered, that life may be made beautiful. Let women delight our eyes like pictures, be harmonious as music and fragrant as flowers, that they also may fulfil their mission of grace and of beauty. By companionship with beautiful thoughts shall their tastes be so formed that their toilets will never be out of harmony with their means or their position. They will be clothed almost as unconsciously as the lilies of the field; but each one will be herself, and there will be no more uniformity in their attire than in their faces.

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## THE FASHION IN POETRY.

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## THE FASHION IN POETRY.

THERE are fashions in literature as well as in dress. At present, sadness is the fashion in poetry. A clever novelist, who is something of a cynic, said to me the other day that he seemed to see the bards of the period sitting all in a row upon the banks of a stream, each one with his handkerchief to his melancholy eyes. And I think this serio-comic presentation is not very far from the truth.

Old Homer sang his song joyfully in the morning of his art. His stately pages were full of sunlight, shining on men in armor and on beautiful women. They resounded with clamor of battle and chants of triumph.

When the strong soldiers fell, their dirges were brief. Their ghosts did not walk, —

“They fell and kept an iron sleep.”

Stir and action and the proud rejoicing of life filled the Homeric cantos. Chaucer was another singer of the morning, like Homer; and for him, too, a clear light shone upon a healthy and an obvious world, —

“Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,” —

and his men and women walked in sunlight. The Elizabethan men were tragic, indeed, but never morbid and seldom melancholy. It has been reserved for the moderns to dip their pens in tears.

It appears to me that the fashion of sorrowfulness and introspection is one that very few English poets of the time escape. You could hardly accuse Browning of it, or Tennyson; and though you find it in Swinburne, whose best hope is that we,

“Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound,”

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and William Morris, who calls himself

“The idle singer of an empty day,”

you find in these two so much besides their misery that you forget to pity them. But among the younger men, who is there that has not vowed himself to the service of Despair?

The most tortured heart of them all — that dweller in his own “City of Dreadful Night,” James Thomson — ended, not so very long ago, the saddest of lives by the saddest of deaths. Darkness took hold on him, like the awful darkness that overspread the world in Jean Paul Richter’s dream, when he dreamed that God was dead; and out of this gloom he went, willingly no doubt, to the grave’s less gloomy solitude.

Philip Bourke Marston — alas, that of him, too, we must write in the past tense! — had desperate reason for his sadness; and he and John Payne, Clarke and a score more, have devoted themselves to the expression



of their hopeless discontent with life. And where shall you find a sadder or a more hopeless man than their elder brother, Matthew Arnold? It is true that his despair is dignified and impersonal. He does not bewail his own narrow woes; but for the race at large he hears nothing better than the "melancholy, long withdrawing roar" of "the sea of Faith" —

"Retreating to the breath  
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world."

And, indeed, it is in this very retreat of the "sea of Faith" that I find the secret of the sadness of our present poetry. Faith has gone out and scepticism has come in. The fashion of unbelief is as prevalent as the fashion of melancholy. "There is nothing to be happy about," as I once heard a depressed child make answer to her mother, who was wishing her little one would be as happy as other children were. "There

is nothing to be happy about," is what the poets of the time tell us in almost so many words. The best consolation they proffer us is the hope of an endless sleep,—a calm through which no memories of the past can ever sting; on whose quiet no morning of resurrection shall ever break. The joys of life, they say, are as tragic as its griefs, because of their very brevity. We live, we love, we die, and if we forget our doom and are happy, so much the worse for us, because then Death, the inevitable, comes to us as our enemy, and not as the one last friend into whose outstretched arms we fall with almost the eagerness of love.

Only yesterday I was talking with a young poet on whom an unimaginative person would have said that fate had surely smiled. His second volume of poems has just appeared under favoring auspices. He is well-born, well-bred, fairly prosperous, and engaged to be married to a girl whom

he loves devotedly; and yet he seemed the very wretchedest of men. In the midst of his joys and his hopes, Death, having an idle moment on hand, had stepped to his side and whispered, "Sometime you must come with *me*,—sometime, and it may be soon." And this whisper was the heart of my friend's despair. He had no cowardly fear of what death could do—if only he had not loved. But to die and leave this other, dearer self bereft,—to die, and know while dying that the last kiss had been given, the last word spoken forever; that to-morrow he should be but dust inurned in dust, dust into which no breath of life would ever again be breathed,—that was the pang.

It seems to me that there is nothing so hopeless as the soul whose horizon is bounded by this world. There is no sunshine so golden that it is worth while to  
ice in it, since so soon the sun shall  
the eternal night close in. I be-

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lieve that I am right, and that with the prevailing fashion of unbelief has come in the prevailing fashion of sadness. If only we had but as much faith as the old pagans who peopled Olympus with godlike shapes, and believed that poets and heroes and men of just life would live again in some far, happy world, then might we take life's joys, as one wears gladly a short-lived, fragrant rose,—not scorning it because its life is brief, not mourning too deeply when it fades, since other roses shall come with other Junes. Then might we bear life's sorrows bravely, since they too go by; and beyond these transient joys and woes stretches eternity. But if we believe that a few brief years shut in the whole chances of a longing, suffering, loving human soul, what wonder that joy seems to us more tragic than grief, and that poetry, which is above all the language of the heart, should breathe the heart's despair?

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